

*A Caution against Ill Company : 6*

O R, A  
**DISCOURSE**

Shewing the  
**Great DANGER**  
O F  
Conversing Familiarly  
W I T H  
**B A D M E N.**

W I T H  
**Two other Useful Discourses.**  
The One Treating on the Dignity and  
Duty of a Christian.  
The Other, on the Great Duty of Sub-  
mission or Resignation to the **WILL**  
of **G O D.**

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*By James Ellesby, Minister of Chiswick.*

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*London, Printed by W. B. for R. Bassett, at  
the Mitre near the Inner-Temple Gate in  
Fleet-street. 1705.*

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TO THE  
Christian READER.

**I** Here present thee with two or three Plain, but, I hope, not Unuseful Discourses, which may be read by any Party or Perswasion of Christians, without fear of having their Private Opinions or Differing Sentiments attack'd or quarrell'd withal; because the Subject relates only to Practical Christianity, exempt from all Controversial Disputes, which are too frequent amongst us, and as frequently miss of their intended Success, for want of Writing and Reading 'em with a true Spirit of Christian Meekness and Charity, which ought to Recommend all our Religious Performances and Undertakings.

I have endeavour'd for several Years past to Unhinge my self from all Par-

## The Preface.

*ties, as such ; as being apt to sowre our Tempers, over-heat our Passions, misguide our Zeal, and consume that Charity which we owe one to another ; and do own my self a Christian or Member of the Catholick Church, in Communion with the Church of England, which I look upon as the best Reformed, and having fewest Corruptions of any other ; and to me there seems nothing wanting, but the Restoring of the Antient Discipline, and the Reforming of the Lives and Manners of her Members to render her most Primitive in her Constitution as well as Doctrine.*

*The former is earnestly desired by her in her Office of Communion ; the Performance of which Pious Wish, or the Endeavouring it at least is a Duty incumbent on our Governours, to whom, with all due Respect, we ought to leave it.*

*But, with Submission be it spoken, it looks, methinks, too much like Dissembling with God and Imposing on the People, to have this Passage stand*  
*in*

## The Preface.

*in our Publick Liturgy, and be read solemnly in our Congregations once a Year, and that too upon one of the greatest Fasts in our Church, when People are, or ought to be, most serious ; and yet no attempt made towards the restoring of this Godly and much wish'd for, but still neglected, Discipline. A matter well worthy the Consideration of both the Houses of Convocation ; in the Zealous promoting whereof, 'tis heartily wished all their little Differences might be swallowed up and finally buried. Little, I call 'em, in compare with the more Substantial and Practicall Truths of our Religion which lye too much neglected, and are seldom taken notice of but in our Pulpits.*

*A Design, which we cannot but know, wou'd in the end be most Acceptable to God, Serviceable to Religion, and Welcom to all the Sober part of the Nation ; not only to those that are within the Communion of our Church, but to many Good Men who as yet separate from it, possibly upon this account, as well as others. (A 3) But*

## The Preface.

*But in the mean time, 'till the Church shall be so Happy, as to have her Discipline restored, it wou'd in some measure supply the want thereof, and be very good Service to Religion, if other Men in their Place and Station, particularly Magistrates, wou'd lend their helping hand to the carrying on the forementioned Design, by reinforcing the Laws against those Enormous Crimes and Raging Distempers, which are found too obstinate for a more Mild and Gentle Cure.*

*And to carry on this Design more effectually, 'tis wisht that Ministers would be more constant to the Duty of Catechising in their respective Parishes, as a most likely Means to help forward this Reformation, by seasoning Youth with good Principles and Religious Instructions, which by the Blessing of God may have a good Influence on their future Lives, and fortifie them against the Infection and Corruption of the Age.*

We



## The Preface.

*We ought to look upon Catechising as no less necessary than Preaching; yea more so to one half of our Congregations; which in many, if not most places, are made up of Persons very Young or very Ignorant: and so not capable of understanding or receiving Benefit by Preaching, for want of a good Foundation first laid to build upon.*

*Practical Holiness and Purity of Life is the main End of the Christian Religion, and shou'd always accompany the Profession of it: therein all Parties are agreed, and there is no Controversie or Dispute about it: for 'tis acknowledged on all hands, that Vice and Debauchery ought to be Discountenanced in all Christians of what Denomination soever.*

*It were therefore to be wish'd that our Private Picques and Publick Disputes about things of lesser moment, which serve only to irritate Peoples Spirits one against another, were more moderated, or else wholly laid aside; and their Zeal united and turned against*  
the



## The Preface.

*the reigning Vices and Corruptions of the times, which are the shame and reproach of our common Christianity.*

*A General Reformation of Manners (so much talkt of of late) as 'tis the chief thing which the Kingdom wants, so 'tis heartily desired of all Good Men; and therefore methinks they should joyn as one Man in the promoting of it. And I wonder how they can call or own themselves the Friends or Disciples of Christ, who shall speak ill of a Design of this Nature, or go about to discourage it; especially when we consider how much Church and State have suffered and are like to do so still by the neglect thereof, and what grievous Complaints are daily made for want of a due Care taken about it.*

*Is not this the end of all our solemn Acts of Worship and Devotion; such as Praying, Preaching, Catechising, &c. and of the two great Instituted Rites of our Religion, viz. Baptism and the Lords Supper? is not the end, I say, of all these Divine Offices, to a-*  
*mend.*

## The Preface.

*mend the Wickedness of the World, and to introduce Holiness in the room thereof? And now I wou'd fain know, how a Christian can Contradict or Oppose any pious and lawful Endeavours that are or shall be set on foot to this purpose, without being as False and Treacherous to his Religion, as Judas once was to the Author of it. And if the Methods or Instruments hitherto made use of, to carry on this truly necessary and Christian Work have been judged not so proper and expedient as cou'd be wished, we ought to Inquire out and Employ others that may do it in a more prudent and effectual manner, without Discouraging the Attempt or speaking ill of the Design.*

*'Tis true, the Doctrine of Christ and Faith of the Primitive Church is retained and profest with greatest Purity in ours; yet this will not be able to do her much Service, while our Manners are so exceedingly corrupt and generally cryed out upon; for after all that can be said one way or other, there*

## The Preface.

there is no more Religion in the World, than what is practised ; nor Conscience among Men, than what makes them fearful of all Sin, and binds them up to the strict performance of their Duty, both towards God and Man : All Pretences to Conscience or Religion, without this, are no better than Faction and Hypocrisie : And therefore they are the best Christians who live up nearest to the common Principles of Christianity ; tho' perchance they may differ in their Judgments about some smaller matters. For to what purpose do we make Profession of that which we call the Reformed Religion, if we be not willing to be Reformed by it our selves, nor desire others shou'd be the Better for it ? Wherefore have we stood up with so much Zeal in its Defence (as lately we have done) if we can sit still and see it daily affronted and exposed, without being concerned at it, or once offering to appear in its Vindication ?

Now tho' all Vice is of a spreading and infectious nature, yet it becomes

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## The Preface.

more fatally so, when it has the Authority and Example of Great Men on its side to Countenance and Encourage it : for this adds a kind of Credit and Reputation thereunto, and makes it pass for currant among the Common sort of People, who know no better, and are wont to plead the Examples of their Superiours for their Excuse and Justification.

But the Vanity of this Plea will, I hope, be made to appear in the following Discourses, such as they are ; the Success whereof I leave to God, heartily wishing it may answer the Pious Ends and Intentions of their Publication.

And I heartily pray farther, that those who are concern'd in, and wish well to a Reformation, would set a good Example to the World in the first place, by amending what is amiss in themselves, and then good hopes they may have, that God will the sooner bear their Prayers and succeed their Indeavours towards the Reforming of others.

P O S T-



## POSTSCRIPT.

**T**HE Names of High-Church and Low-Church taken up of late amongst us, what are they but Names of Faction and Division, and what end do they serve for? Not that of Religion, be sure, which daily suffereth and loseth ground by such Uncharitable Distinctions. They serve only to form and distinguish Parties, widen our Breaches, and keep up our Animosities; which, God knows, stand in more need of Lenitives to mollifie and heal 'em, than of Corrosives to enrage and exasperate 'em.

I think it wou'd be time much better spent, to strive to become Good Christians in the Bosom of that Church we hold Communion withal, than to sow Seeds of Quarrel and Contention within her Inclosure. And if we did  
but



## POSTSCRIPT.

*but sincerely endeavour to do this, it wou'd much take off from the Rancour and Bitterness of our Spirits, and become the most Effectual Means to Soften our Passions, Reconcile our Interests, and Unite all Christians, if not in the same Communion and Sentiment of Things, yet in the Common Bond of Christian Charity, which the Apostle calls the Bond of Perfection; and withal is so Excellent a Grace, so useful and necessary a Duty in one Christian towards another, that not all Knowledge, nor all Faith, nor the Gifts of Prophecy nor the Power of Miracles, nor Good Works; no, nor Martyrdom it self in Dying for our Religion, would be able to profit us without it, if S. Paul may be believed, 1 Cor. I. 13. And this I earnestly recommend to the serious consideration of our several contending Parties, and such as have more Zeal and Heat for a particular Sect or darling Notion of their own, than for our Common Christianity. And let 'em consider further, that it signifies*

(b)

## P O S T S C R I P T.

*fies nothing what Church they are of, or what Communion they contend for, while they are destitute of the most Necessary and Saving Principles of their Religion, and by their Uncharitable Disputes concerning its minuter Parts and Circumstances, give occasion to its Adversaries to call in question the Truth of the Whole.*

*There is too much reason to suspect, that the little progress which Christianity has of late made in the World, over what it did formerly, is chiefly owing to the ill Lives of its Professors, together with the quarrelsome Disputes and Uncharitable Zeal of one Party against another. This has proved so great a Scandal to the World, and Prejudice to Religion, that instead of gaining over Heathens and Infidels to the Christian Faith, many Christians themselves have been tempted to deny the Faith, and turn Infidels both in their Principles and Practise. And tho' Offences will come, as our Saviour has foretold, yet woe to them*  
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## POSTSCRIPT.

by whom the Offence comes, *Matth.*  
18. 7.

*I pray God of his infinite Mercy to provide a Remedy in time for this Fatal and Spreading Mischief, by Reconciling our Differences, Extinguishing our Animosities, and giving a Check to the Looseness and Infidelity of the Age; or else when the Son of Man cometh shall he find Faith upon the Earth? Luke 18. 8.*

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*A Caution against Ill Company :*

O R, A

# DISCOURSE

Shewing the

## D A N G E R

O F

Conversing Familiarly

W I T H

## B A D M E N.

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*By James Ellesby, Minister of Chiswick.*

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*Fuge, ceu Pestem, Malum Consortium  
Et Malum Consilium*

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L O N D O N,

Printed by *W. Botham*, for *R. Bassett*, at the  
*Mitre* near the *Inner-Temple Gate* in  
*Fleet-street.* 1705.

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TO THE  
Right Honourable  
**CHARLES**  
Earl of *Burlington*, &c.

**T**HE following Discourse is humbly Dedicated by the Author ; who beseeches Almighty  
A 2 God

*The Dedication.*

God to bless his Lordship with *Health* and *long Life*, with a *Liberal* and *Generous* Education, with a *Vertuous* and *Religious* Disposition, with all Accomplish'd Endowments both *Natural* and *Moral*, which may render him the *Joy* and *Support* of his Family, an *Honour* and *Ornament* to his Country, a singular Example of *Prudence* and *Piety* in his Conduct, and an happy Instrument of doing much Good

### *The Dedication.*

Good in his Generation,  
and becoming serviceable  
both to *Church* and *State*,  
in that Eminent Station  
wherein God has placed  
him. And, lastly, 'tis  
prayed, that as his Lord-  
ship advances in Age and  
Experience, he may hap-  
pily avoid all those *Rocks*  
and *Shelves*, *Ill Customs* and  
*Bad Examples* I mean, on  
which so many hopeful  
young *Gentlemen* have made  
Ship-wreck both of their  
*Honour* and *Estates*.

A 3

This,

*The Dedication.*

This, my Lord, is the  
heartly Prayer and Wish  
of him, who is very Am-  
bitious of doing

*Your Lordship*

*the Best Service he is capable of.*

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D I S.



## DISCOURSE I.

*A Caution against Ill Company ; or, A Discourse shewing the Great Danger of Conversing Familiarly with Bad Men.*

WHEN we consider the general Corruption of the Age, and the great Reputation which Vice hath got in a Nation professing a Religion that most strictly forbids, and severely threatens it, under the highest and greatest Penalties that can possibly be conceived ; we cannot but stand amazed thereat, and

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be

be ready to cast about in our Thoughts, what should be the occasion of so foul an *Apostacy*, as that which the Christian World doth at present lie under.

And here we need not go far to seek for a Reason of it, if we consider how little this Religion is believed by many that make an outward Profession of it, and wear the Livery of Christ's Disciples ; yet in truth are no better than down-right Pagans and Infidels under a Christian Name ; and who do it more mischief upon that account than all its most open and allowed Adversaries among the Heathen.

For they think it not enough to disbelieve Christianity, and call in question the truth thereof, unless they likewise decry and run it down, exposing its Credit by their profane Jest, and Atheistical Scoffs, which have more in them of Rudeness and ill Manners,

ners, than of Wit or good Breeding : Neither are they content to keep their Opinions to themselves, but like malicious people infected with the Plague, they make it their Business to scatter the Venom and Contagion thereof where ever they come, and among all people they converse with. And no wonder then, if the Lives and Practices of such persons be as loose as their Principles, and they become alike Dangerous and Debaucht in both.

This is a Distemper, which hath more or less infected all sorts and degrees of Men among us, especially young Gentlemen and Persons of the cheifest Quality ; who as soon as they are got loose from Government, and peep abroad into the World, are presently caught up by the Libertines of the Age, the great Corrupters of Faith Manners, who stand ready to seize and make

Prey of them ; or else they find them out of their own accord to make an Unfortunate Acquaintance withal and list themselves into their Clubb and Society ; where they are no sooner entred, but they become lost, in a manner, to all that is good, hopeful, and vertuous, and are in the Highway to Ruine and Destruction. For when once they are engaged among this sort of Men, and have been tainted by them ; it's a Miracle if ever they escape their Hands, or recover themselves out of the Snares and Temptations which they have laid for them ; its very Rare, that we hear of any that do so.

Therefore I think it a very charitable Office, as well as Incumbent Duty, to warn all people, Young ones especially, of the Company of such persons, and lay open the Danger and Infection of such Mens Principles and Practices,

to

to the end they may avoid them betimes, and not be drawn away by their Ill Counsels or Pernicious Examples, which are the two main things that corrupt the Minds and Manners of Men, and prejudice them against all that is Good and Vertuous. To which purpose, I shall take notice,

1. Of the general Wickedness of the World, the multitudes of Bad Examples, that are therein.

2. Endeavour to arm, and fortifie you against the Danger and Infection thereof, whenever you shall have occasion to come among them, and cannot handsomely avoid them.

1. I shall take notice of the general Wickedness that is in the World, and the Multitudes of Bad Examples, which do every where abound.

This no Man that knows any thing of the World can be Ignorant of; neither is it any new  
remark



remark or observation ; for the Pravity and Corruption of humane Nature hath been the general complaint of almost all Ages. The Wise Men among the Heathen were very sensible thereof, and variously disputed the Causes of it. The Apostle likewise took notice of it in his days, when he said, *the whole World lyes in Wickedness*, 1. John. 5. 19. and if it did so then, we have as much reason for the like Complaint now, on whom the ends of the World are come, which are therefore called *perillous Times*, because Iniquity shall then abound ; according to our Saviour's Prediction, *Math. 24. 12.*

For those Vices and Immoralities, which heretofore fled into the dark, and withdrew themselves into the most obscure and retired Privacies, as ashamed of the Light and unwilling to be exposed, have made bare their Face,  
dis-

discovered an impudent Fore-head,  
and walk daily in Publick with-  
out Disguise. Many Christians live  
so open and unconcerned in some  
of the foulest Sins and grossest  
Enormities, as if Iniquity was esta-  
blisht by a Law, and God had  
given them not only Permission,  
but a Command to vie sensuality  
with the Brutes, and to become  
as wicked and sinful as Sin it self  
can make them.

This Age affords abundance of  
persons metamorphos'd into Beasts  
without a Fable, who have cast  
off all that is Modest and Man-like,  
and aspire after such high degrees  
and measure of Guilt, as one would  
think the Reason of Man, but  
especially the Profession of Chri-  
stians, were not capable of. Nature  
now adays is debauched by Art;  
and Men have learnt to improve  
themselves into a more refined  
and artificial sort of Guilt then for-  
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mer Ages, and more innocent times have been acquainted with.

In general, so bad is the World, that truly Serious and Conscientious persons, should they stand alone, would make but a small and indifferent Figure, while Vice and Wickedness, Lewdness and Debauchery do every where swarm with their vast Numbers and engroft Multitudes.

To trace the Sons of *Belial* throughout all their Turnings and Windings, crooked and oblique Paths, would be an endless thing, and scarce practicable; considering not only the Vastness of their Guilt, but the great Variety and Contradiction of their Humours. Some Men are Invidiously wicked, more so out of spite and opposition to Vertue, than out of any great love they bear to Vice; they are afraid of being thought too Good amidst this general Apostacy and Declension of the Age,  
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and for that reason take a Pride in being thought worse that they are : But by this means being Hypocrites in Vice, they make themselves much greater Criminals in Religion likewise. Others again are such profest Patrons of Impiety, that they endeavour what they can to spread and promote it in the World, and give it all the Assistance and Encouragement they are able ; as if they intended to make Vice as lasting and durable as Humane Nature, by propagating instances of Guilt and Folly to all succeeding Ages and Generations.

Now how can we except that Virtue and Goodness should be able to thrive and prosper, when it meets every where with such multitudes of Enemies, and Opposers ; and finds so very few Friends to take its part or give it countenance. To consider what Interest and Reputation Vice hath got in the World, and what Con-

Contempt and Reproach a fixt and steady Vertue is pursued withal on all hands, and among all Parties, when it makes against their Interest, would almost tempt a Serious Man to renounce the World, and retire into Shades and Solitude, where there is less of Company, but more of Innocence. And indeed this very Consideration among others, gave the first occasion to an Anchorite's and Recluse sort of Life; many pious and devout persons retreating into Deserts and Wilderesses, on purpose to fly the Temptations of greater Towns and populous Cities: They chose rather to converse with Beasts of Gods own immediate making, than with such as made themselves so, they being the more Monstrous and dangerous of the two.

But there is no necessity for any to do this; for should all Good Men follow this Example,

the



the World would be left to it  
 self, to foam and rage in its  
 own wickedness, without any hopes  
 of becoming Better. Moreover  
 our Saviour hath given us no  
 Command or Encouragement for  
 any thing of this nature: For  
 tho' in his time the World was  
 over-run with all manner of wick-  
 edness, both *Jeweish* and *Pagan*,  
 yet he did not turn Hermite, or  
 retire absolutely from the Society  
 and Conversation of Men. *Matth.*  
*11. 18, 19.* For that would have  
 overthrown the great end of his  
 coming into the World, which  
 was to Better and Reform it, as  
 well by his Example as Doctrine;  
 and therefore he convertt freely  
 and publickly with all sorts,  
 like a Physician among his Patients;  
 refusing none his Company, who  
 came with a desire to learn, or  
 upon whom he thought he might  
 make a Cure.

And

And herein the Example of Christ ought to be Matter of our Imitation ; not to betake our selves to Deserts and Solitudes, where we shall meet with but few Opportunities of doing good ; but we should publicly endeavour, (*we of the Clergy more especially*) by our sound Doctrine and pious Examples, to promote Religion in the World, and to stem, if possible, that Tyde of Wickedness, which sets with so strong and impetuous a Current, and is in danger to carry away Weak and Unwary People with the force and violence of its Stream.

Before I proceed to the Caution and Advice I promised you in this Case ; give me leave to acquaint you, in the second place, in what sense we may, and may not, engage in the Company of Bad Men.

For the better understanding of this, we must consider that there

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is a great deal of difference between being in the Company of Bad Men, and the Keeping of them company : The former we can never wholly avoid by all our care and industry ; for then, as the Apostle saith, *we must needs go out of the World.* 1 Cor. 5. 10. for as long as the World stands, there will be bad Men of all sorts ; and while they live together in the World, we cannot always avoid them be we never so careful or desirous of it : For,

I. 'Tis impossible but that at some time or other we shall fall into their Company unawares, and against our Wills, when we design nothing of it : For where there are Good and Bad Men mingled together, it's not to be imagined, but that we shall sometimes light upon the Bad as well as the Good ; nay, the former is the more likely of the two. because the Wicked in all Ages have exceeded the Good,  
and

and got the advantage of Numbers on their side.

2d. Our very Callings and Imployments in the World do many times cast us among all sorts of Men, and oblige us to hold a Civil and Decent Conversation with them; and this cannot be avoided as long as Men keep up Trade and Commerce in the World, which engageth them in great variety of Business and Company.

3d. 'Tis possible we may have Friends and Relations of our own, near Neighbours and Acquaintance, that may be none of the most regular in their Morals, or sober in their Conversation. Now in this case it would be very hard to think we are obliged either to a perpetual shyness, or total forbearance of their Company; this would look something Unnatural, and carry too great a shew of

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of Moroseness and ill Nature along with it.

4th. A good Man may receive many Kindnesses and good Offices from a bad Men; and in that Case too, Gratitude and Civility do oblige him to repay one Kindness with another; to acknowledge every Man's Civility, and repay it when Opportunity serves. Now this cannot be done, without some sort of Correspondence between them in the World.

5th. We may sometimes go into the Company of Bad Men, or admit them into ours, out of a design, of doing if possible, some good upon them; we may converse with them; as a Physician converses with Sick and Diseased Persons; or as Christ did with the *Scribes* and *Pharises*, with *Publicans* and *Sinners*; not out of any fondness or delight we take in their Company; but in hopes of reclaiming or working upon them by good



good Counsel and Advice, if per-  
*adventure* God would give them  
*Repentance to the acknowledging of*  
*the Truth,* 2 Tim. 2. 25.

This indeed is a blessed Design,  
 but which every good Man, that  
 means well, is not capable of ;  
 he must be a Well-resolved, Pru-  
 dent and Experienc'd Christian,  
 that is fit to undertake a design  
 of this Nature, which carries so  
 much of danger and hazard along  
 with it ; he ought to fortifie him-  
 self before-hand with the strongest  
 Antidotes, for fear he should  
 catch the Infection himself, while  
 he charitably attempts the Cure  
 of it in others. But however  
 the thing, in it self considered  
 carries a great deal of Goodness  
 and Piety in it, and if undertaken  
 by Persons capable thereof, may  
 by the Blessing of God and Pru-  
 dence in the management, be  
 made use of to very good ends and

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purposes , as sometimes it hath been done.

So that in some or all of the fore-mentioned Respects , 'tis a thing next to impossible, wholly to avoid the Company of bad Men upon one account or other.

But now, as I said before, 'tis one thing to be in the Company of bad Men or wicked Persons, and another thing to keep them company as our Intimate and Familiar Acquaintance, or strike up a League and Friendship with them. The former may be accidental and against our Wills ; but this latter must be matter of Deliberation and Choice , and cannot be done without our own voluntary consent. 'Tis one thing to deal with them by way of Trade or Commerce ; to repair to them on the account of Business ; to visit them as a Relation, or be civil to them as a Friend and Neigh-

Neighbour ; but another thing to take them in our Bosom, or choose them for our constant Companions and daily Associates ; which a Man can never do without running a mighty hazard of his Vertue and Innocency ; and such as no truly Wise or Good Man would put to the venture : And therefore I shall now proceed, in the

3d. place, to Caution you against the Company and Conversation of Bad Men, and fortify you against the Malignity and Contagion thereof ; especially such as are publickly Vicious, openly Scandalous and Profane. Now this may be done these two ways: 1. by coming among them as seldom as may be: 2d. by watching and resolving before-hand against the Danger and Infection, when you cannot always avoid their Company.

1. To prevent the Danger that may arise from bad Men, the best

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best way is, if we can do it handsomely, to avoid their Company, and come among them as little as may be: For Absence generally is the best Antidote against Infection; and 'tis both Safe and Prudent to withdraw from a Temptation, when there is little hopes of avoiding it any other way: In such a case 'tis better to make an Honourable Retreat than to hazard our Virtue by a Weak and Feeble Defence. Here then the advice of the Wise-Man comes in, and is most proper and seasonable, Prov. 4. 14. *Enter not into the Paths of the Wicked, go not into the Way of Evil Men, avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it and pass away.*

Now this Advice will not be thought over-strict and severe, if you consider with me the great Mischief and Inconveniency, which

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commonly ariseth from too great a Freedom and Familiarity with bad Men or Women ; for,

1. There is no hopes of any Good to be got among them. This is true upon many accounts, but more especially with respect to Religion, which is greatly injur'd and obstructed thereby. There is no greater hindrance to the regular Practice of Religion and Piety, than the Conversation of such Men as are prejudiced against it : 'Tis scarce possible for a Man to be good long, or good to any purpose, who engageth himself too frequently and familiarly among the vain and looser sort of People. For Example is very prevalent, and carries a mighty stroak and influence along with it, either to excite to Virtue, or tempt to Vice ; but Vice in many respects hath the advantage over Virtue, in that



it hath our corrupt Natures, and evil Inclinations to back and befriend it.

Company is a Mold that is apt to fashion the Manners of those that are cast into it : An intimate Conversation with bad Men is likely to stamp our Minds with ill Impressions, and form our Natures to bad Customs and vicious Habits, which are quickly learnt, but not so easily forgot or worn out again.

Therefore it concerns all Persons, but young people more especially, to be very shy and cautious of their Company ; to have a mighty care what Friendships and Acquaintance they contract at their first setting out into the World, [what Persons they become Intimate and Familiar withal.] Because this is a Matter of very great importance as to the future Conduct of their Lives : yea

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many times their Well-doing in both Worlds doth in a great measure depend upon the Prudence of their choice herein *in this respect*. They should then choose their Acquaintance by the Advantages they hope to receive from them in point of Wisdom and Knowledge, Virtue and Goodness; and not merely to gratify a vain, light and frothy Humour, which yet is the chief thing in Conversation that takes most with the Present Age. A Humour very inconsistent with the Gravity and Seriousness of Christian Principles, unsuitable to that Pious and Devout Frame of mind, which ariseth from an Awful Sense of God and Religion, and which ought to be continually upon our Minds, and is made by the wise Man the first beginning or step to Wisdom and Knowledge, *Prov. 9. 10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy is understand-*  
ing,

*ing, Job. 28. 28. And unto Man  
he said, behold the fear of the Lord,  
that is Wisdom, and to depart from  
evil is Understanding.*

The End therefore of Conver-  
sation is not so much to sport  
and pass away our time in a vain  
foolish and unprofitable manner,  
as to redeem it for the improving  
our selves and others in true Wis-  
dom and solid Virtue, for the  
growing Wiser and Better every  
day than other. The Company  
therefore of such Men is most to  
be valued and sought after, which  
conduceth more immediately to this  
Great and Excellent End : And  
tho' it be true, that Mirth and  
Cheerfulness are sometimes neces-  
sary and convenient to relax and  
divert our Minds, even as Sauce  
is to relish our Meat and keep up  
our Appetite ; yet innocent Mirth  
is infinitely preferable to that which  
is light and frothy, lewd and pro-  
fane ;

fane ; and the pleasure conceived in the Society of Wise and Good Men is of all others the most Satisfactory and Delightful to a virtuous and well-disposed Mind and is such as leaves no Remorse or Sting of Guilt behind it.

That which is commonly call'd good Company in the Language of good Fellows, experience tells us, is none of the Best : For they teach us not to improve, but to lavish away and mispend our time, and with it very often our Health, Estate, and Reputation to boot ; so that not only single persons, but sometimes whole Families suffer thereby, and rue the miserable Effects of such Mens Conversation. For, alas, what is there to be got or learnt among them, but a great deal of ill, that must be unlearnt again, and deeply repented of, if ever we would grow good and set up to be serious.

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Can it be any pleasure to a good Man, to hear Men run down Virtue and Religion at that rate as many do? to hear them talk irreverently of their Maker, and contemptuously of all such as endeavour to be like him. What satisfaction can it be to a sober person, to hear Men fly out into the lavish commendations of a Sensual and Debauch'd Life, or to become the avow'd Advocates of Sin and Vice? What delight is it to have our Ears grated with formidable Oaths and Curses upon every little Emotion of Passion, and sometimes upon none at all, or to behold them Quarrelling with those that will not bear them company in all their heights and excesses of Intemperance?

He that can think this to be Pleasure or Good Company, may as



well call *Darkness Light*, and *Light Darkness*, as the Prophet speaks, *Isaiah* 5. 20. that is, give the Name of one Contrary to another; and with such sort of good Company Hell it self is like to be throng'd and crouded, and can afford him enough thereof, if no other can please him.

2d. Instead of receiving any Good by ill Company, we are in danger to receive a great deal of Harm, and be set a great way back in a Virtuous and Religious course of Life. For suppose a Man should resolve never so seriously to take up and amend the former wickedness of this Life, or to live more strict and cautious for the future; yet if he doth not refrain from Ill Company, and take up a resolution against them, he can never hope to be good long, nor avoid those Snares which will be laid for him: Nay, let him be  
never

never so constant to the Religious use of the Means, yet their subtle and malicious Insinuations will be able to spoil all, enough to stagger the firmest Resolutions, and render all the methods of Divine Grace vain and ineffectual: No Counsel nor Reproof; no Instruction nor Advice; neither Sermons nor Sacraments will be able to prevail against the Temptations of bad Men, or take effect against the force and influence of a Corrupt and Vicious Example. For the Sons of *Belial* stand ready to undo all that ever hath been done by the motion of God's Spirit within, or the instruction of his Word without us: 'Tis their business and delight to corrupt and prejudice one another against the great and weighty Truths of Religion; to suppress and stifle all hopeful Beginnings and Dispositions to Virtue in those they converse withal; to laugh and jeer

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them

them out of their most Serious Purposes and Resolutions, and by wrong Names and reproachful Terms, to put people, if possible, out of conceit with their Duty : And I suppose, I may have the experience of some of my Readers to confirm the Truth of what I say.

Let a Man begin to take up and grow Serious, and they will presently conclude he is *Melancholly* and *Morose* ; if he scruples a compliance with their Follies and Extravagances, he is then *Nice* and *Precise* ; if he makes a more than ordinary Profession of Virtue and Godliness, and lives a Devout, Regular, and well-ordered Life, then presently he passes for a *Fanatick*, or some such thing. Which last, let me tell you by the way, is a mighty Reproach and Scandal to our Church ; as if they, whom they call by that Name were the only

only persons in the World that have a Shew or Sense of Religion ; or that none could be Serious, but he must presently desert our Communion, and list himself into a Contrary Party : When as God be praised, we have in our Church as many Helps and Encouragements to become Religious and Devout, as there are to be found any where else throughout the Christian World. And if any cause hath been given for the forementioned Charge, it hath been occasioned through the lewd and offensive Behaviour of this sort of Men we have been speaking of ; who tho' they are pleased to own themselves of our *Communion*, and show themselves sometimes in our Publick Assemblies, yet are meer strangers to all Religion, and know not what Reverence and Devotion means. Such Men can be no great Credit to any Church or Party they shall joyn themselves with ;  
and

and therefore to what purpose should we be fond of them : Nay, if such Rotten Members were cut off from the Body of the Church, I dare say she would be no Looser by it ; Religion I am certain would not, which hath suffer'd so much already on their account.

But to proceed ; the Strictness and Regularity of a Holy Life ought not to be confined to a particular Party, much less charg'd as a Reproach upon any. For Holiness is the Doctrine and Design of the Gospel, the chief End and Aim of our Christian Profession, which belongs in common to all that own themselves Christians ; and then why not to our *Church and Communion* among the rest ? Such Men therefore may as well charge the very Profession of Religion with being Fanatical and Precise, as the Practise of it ; and I am sure no  
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Man will adventure to do either, but such as are Enemies to both, and would gladly bring all Religion into contempt.

And this, I fear, is at the bottom of such Mens Designs; who having no Religion of their own, have but little Kindness for it in others; and therefore by calling things by wrong Names, and giving them Reproachful Terms, endeavour to prejudice them against all that is good and Serious.

Wherefore, in the 3<sup>d</sup> place,

3<sup>d</sup>. We ought to avoid the Company of bad Men, as the great Instruments and Agents which the wicked one makes use of to ruine and destroy Souls.

There are a great many *Tempters* in the World besides the Devil, and such are little less Enemies to the

the Souls of Men, than he is, who engage in the same Cause, and set on foot the same Pernicious Designs against God and Religion as he doth. Were it not for them the *Devil* could not make so many Profelytes ; neither would he be capable of doing so much Mischief in the World as commonly he doth : But 'tis the *Debauched* and *Lewder* sort of Men, which espouse his Interest, and plead his Cause, and act his Part ; and that much more effectually, than otherwise he himself would be able to do. For should that evil Spirit show himself in his own Colours, or appear openly in a Temptation, he would be more likely to Scare from it, than Allure to it : But now wicked Men are cloathed in our Nature, and endued with like Passions and Affections with our selves, we converse more freely and familiarly with them ; and by this means they are apt to surprise us unawares, and to get with-

within us, when we least suspect them. Now surely, if the *Tempter* himself, were he Visible upon Earth, ought to be dreaded and abhorr'd by us as the avow'd Enemy of Mankind, as the Envier of their Happiness, and Promoter of their Ruine; then for the same reason, we ought to be no less afraid of his Factors and Instruments that are abroad in the World, and employ'd by him to carry on his Design.

Doth it not therefore concern us to oppose our selves against all Designs and Attempts of this nature, to avoid those Nets and Snares, which are laid by the great Adversary of Souls, and to be as shy and cautious of his Agents and Emissaries, as we would be of the Tempter himself, should he come and set upon us in an open manner, as once he did upon our Blessed Saviour?

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Therefore when we observe, how forward some Men are to entice others to Sin, and draw them into a Temptation, ought we not to be as earnest in calling them back, and forewarning them of the Danger, if possible to rescue them *out of the Snare of the Devil*, and save those that are ready to perish? Shall Bad Men make it their Business to endanger Souls, and bring them into the same Guilt and Condemnation with themselves; and shall *We*, who are entrusted with the care of *them*, tamely look on, and hold our Peace for fear of disobliging and giving Offence? Shall they take so much pains, and use so many Arts to *croud Hell! and fill up the place of Torments*; and shall we be at none at all to prevent their Designs, and pull them *as Fire-brands out of the Fire*? *Jude. 23.* Surely the Souls of Men are little beholding to us, if we have not as much Cou-

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rage and Resolution in our Endeavours to *Save* them, as wicked Men have in their attempts to *Ruine* them; especially considering, *they are our Flock, and part of our Charge* committed to us by God, and for which *We must be accountable another day*. Have we not therefore as much reason to appear Zealous in a *good Cause*, as any Man can have, to grow Bold and Confident in a *bad* one? And if this be not enough to excuse our Zeal and justify our most Fervent Endeavours this way, we will set down contentedly under the worst of their Reproaches, and set as light by them, as they usually do *by* our Instruction and Reproof.

And so much for the first General; Namely, that if we would avoid the Danger of Ill Company, we must come among them as seldom as may be. But

2dly.



2dly. But because I have shew'd you before, we cannot always avoid the Conversation of Ill Men we must endeavour to arm and fortifie our selves against the Danger and Infection thereof when at any time they may lye in our way and we shall have Occasion, as sometimes we may, to converse with them.

Now my Advice in this case, shall be this ; that when you find your selves engaged in any Company which you have reason to suspect as none of the best, be cautious of Two things :

1st. *Not to take their Counsell or comply with their Examples in any thing that is ill.*

2d. *Think never the worse of Religion for their Scoffing and making Mock of it.*

1. If you cannot wholly avoid their Company; yet be sure to stand upon your Guard, and take up a Resolution not to *Comply* beyond the bounds of Innocence and Decency. Stir not a foot beyond what is *Lawful and Expedient*; for if once you come to quit your Post, and pass your Bounds, you will not know where to stop, nor when to give over. For Company is acknowledged to be a very tempting and bewitching thing; it makes Men do many things both against their Interest and Inclination, and which otherwise they would not have done but out of Compliance to their Company, and because they would not be thought *Unsociable*.

Therefore abundance of Caution and Prudence is necessary to be us'd here; a great deal of Courage and Resolution to resist a Temptation when once you are engaged among them. 'Tis an easy matter to swim down

down the Stream, or be carried away with a Croud ; but to bear up against the one or the other, *hic labour, hoc opus*, this is the hardest and most difficult task of all : And yet this is *absolutely necessary* for a Christian, who would keep close to his Duty, and lead his Life agreeable to the Principles and Obligations of his Profession. He will be sure to meet with many Temptations and Discouragements in the pursuit and progress of a Virtuous Life, which he must before-hand arm himself against : He must resolve to bear up under all Opposition with a Mind hardned against Reproach, and be prepared with his Saviour to suffer the scorn and contradiction of Sinners, rather than grow weary and faint in his Mind for he that doth so is very unfit to engage in this Warfare.

Sometimes they will upbraid you with *Singularity*, and object *Preciseness*

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in the case. This, I confess, in little and unnecessary things is an Argument of Folly and Affectation; but in point of Virtue and Religion, 'tis a Token of deep Thought and serious Reflection. Some people love to be singular in particular *Modes and Fashions*, which they envy to the Vulgar, and hate when they grow common; why then should that be accounted a fault in Religion, which they think to be none at all in *Pride and Vanity*?

But if the Practice of Religion be singular, pray who are they that make it so? or who are to be blamed for it? Did all those who own themselves Christians live up to what they have solemnly Bound and Engaged themselves by their *Baptismal Vow and Promise*, the practice of Christianity would be no longer Singular, but as Universal and Extensive as the very Name and Profession of it: And so it was in the

the *Primitive Times*, the sight of a Profligate and Debaucht Christian was as *rare and singular* then as 'tis *common and usual* among us now. But Virtue and Goodness must be charged with Singularity, as long as the greatest part of the *World lyes in Wickedness*, 1 John. And if ever Singularity be justifiable and praiseworthy, 'tis in being *singularly Good* and *Virtuous*, in excelling the generality of mankind, in despising the World, the vain Customs and lewd Examples thereof and in living *blameless and harmless*, as the Sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crook'd and perverse Generation, *Phil. 2. 15*. And he that in this case is ashamed or afraid to be thought singular, can never hope to make up one of Christ's little Flock, but must expect his Fate among the common Herd.

Perhaps, on the other hand, may be judged *Rudeness and Incivility*



lity, when in company not to do as they do, especially as to the Excesses of Meats and Drinks: but why so? If there be any Rudeness in the case, it lyes on their side, not on yours, in pressing you beyond the bounds of what is Modest and Decent, Safe and Convenient: And I know no Rudeness or Incivility comparable to that, which openly affronts God and his Laws on the one hand, and which besots and depraves Humane Nature on the other; the one makes us Beasts, and the other Devils in the Figure of a Man.

And thus 'tis no hard matter to put by all the Scoffs and Reproaches of bad men, and make them recoil on the first Aggressours themselves.

2d. When you chance to happen into the Company of bad Men, never think the worse of Religion, nor be

be put out of conceit with your Duty, for any thing they shall spitefully object or profanely alledge against it : But in the

I. First place, Take your measures of Religion, not from the Opinions of Men or Example of the Multitudes, but from the Records of Holy Scripture, where alone it is to be found pure and uncorrupt; free from all those gross Mixtures and Allayes wherewith Ill Men, for their own private Ends, have corrupted and debased it : Where you will find Religion to be quite another thing from that which is commonly talkt of and practiced in the World ; that the service it requires from us is *reasonable service*, such as becomes Rational Creatures to pay to their wise and great Creator ; that its Commands are *Holy, Just, and Good*, tending in their own nature to the Happiness and Perfection of ours. In a word, that 'tis the  
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Eternal Truth and Wisdom of God, that never alters or changes with the *Fashions of the World, which soon pass away*, nor with the Fancies or Opinions of Men, which commonly wait upon their Interest, and are subservient to their Lusts and Passions.

The Principles of Religion as contained in the Sacred *Oracles*, like God himself, who is the Author of them, admit of no *variableness or shadow of turning*; for what is *once* a Truth in Religion, always is and will be so.

It hath been an usual practice in all Ages to set on foot and cry up those Doctrines and Opinions, which suit most with Mens corrupt Appetites and Inclinations, with their Secular Interest and Advantage; and on the other hand, to bring those into Contempt and Reproach with the people, which

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at any time run cross and counter to their Designs ; whereof the present Age is a deplorable Instance, in respect of those *loose and pernicious Doctrines*, which are taken up and pleaded for by the Libertines of the Age, who are impatient of all Restraint, and would be under no Government, but that of their Slavish Lusts and Domineering Passions.

But this shifting of Principles, and *turning about with every Wind of Doctrine*, is like to be not only a *Scandal* to, but the *Ruine* of, all Religion ; for if once we come to measure Good and Evil, to judge of Truth and Errour, by Mens private Interest, or Enthusiastick Conceits on the one hand ; or by the Publick Affronts and Reproaches which are cast upon them on the other, we must immediately discard, not only *Reveal'd*, but *Natural Religion* ; and reduce the Principles of both into so small and narrow a compass

as it will be a hard matter at last to find out, either what is Truth or what is Religion. We must then not only part with our Bibles, but lay aside our Reason and Understanding too; and suffer our selves to be *put upon* by every designing Person, or confident Imposer, who hath a turn to serve, or a Lust to gratifie. This, I say, would be the Mischievous Consequence of judging of Truth, especially the Great Truths of Religion, by the Opinions and Prejudices of Men, rather than by the known Rule and Standard of *Gods Word*; a Rule so streight and perfect, as cannot warp, and will not be byast for any Interest or Advantage in the World.

Again, on the other hand, do not think the better of Vice for the multitudes of those that engage in it; nor conceive it one whit the more *Creditable* for the name or lustre of a great *Example*, how Eminent



nent or Conspicuous so ever. Vice  
 is never the more to be embrac'd for  
 the number of its Flatterers and Ad-  
 mirers, nor Virtue to be dispis'd  
 and had in contempt on the account  
 of the Paucity or Meanness of  
 those that stand up and appear  
 publickly in its defence. For the *most*  
 make the *worst* Choice, and go the  
*wrong way*; the greatest Company  
 both for *Number and Quality*, 'tis  
 to be fear'd, will be found travelling  
 in the *broad Road* that leads to  
*Destruction*; while the *streight Path*  
*and narrow Way* is but little fre-  
 quented, *and few there be that find*  
*it*, saith our Saviour, *Matth. 7.*  
*13, 14.*

2d. Consider tho' Religion and  
 Virtue may not always meet  
 with that Esteem and Veneration  
 which is due unto them; yet this  
 is certain, they never yet were  
 adjudg'd *Scandalous* in the World,  
 as Irreligion and Profaneness  
 have

have always been: Yea, those very Men who could never be reconciled to it in their own Persons, have Rever'd and Honour'd it in the Persons of Good Men; and they that think otherwise have had the Suffrage of the Generality of mankind in all Ages to Refute and contradict them.

Alas! the Sensual and Vicious are not competent Judges in Religious matters; *the carnal man discerns not the things of the Spirit*, saith the Apostle, *because they are spiritually discerned*; and not to be judged of by the Rules and Maxims of *worldly Wisdom, sensual Interest, or carnal Policy*. The minds of Sinners are *darkned through the blindness that is in them*: the Disorder of their Passions, and the Fumes of their Lusts and Intemperance cast a Mist before their Eyes, and cloud their Understandings, whereby they are unable to discern

the great Truths of God in their own proper and natural light ; in which respect their Wisdom is by the Holy Ghost adjudg'd *Foolishness*, 1 Cor. 19. and their Practice *Madness*, Eccles. 9. 3.

Now would any Man go to a *Fool* to learn *what is Wisdom*, or to a *mad man*, *what is sound Judgment and Understanding* ? so in this case, shall we go to the *wicked and debauched* part of Mankind to learn *what is Religion*, or to the *worldly and sensual* to instruct us in the things of the *Spirit*, or teach us *the deep things of God* ?

Methinks 'tis a strange and wonderful Contradiction to hear Christians set light by *Christianity*, and talk against it at that rate as many do ; to hear them quarrel with and reproach the strictness of that Religion, which they themselves do own as to the name and professi-

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on of it at least, and would make us believe they hope one day to be *Saved by*. As if a Man was to be thought worse of for being that in good earnest, which they themselves pretend to be in jest ; or that Falshood and Treachery were to be adjudg'd no Crimes in Religion, which yet are universally condemned as *base and villanous* in all other instances thereof. This is a Degree of Guilt peculiar to Christians : Men of no other Sect or Perswasion (that I know of) ever stood publicly charg'd with exposing their Religion, and rallying the Doctrines and Principles thereof, as the Professors of Christianity have frequently done.

*Hard therefore hath been thy Entertainment, O Blessed Jesus, which in every Age thou hast met withal, to be thus vilify'd and reproach'd, affronted and dishonour'd, not so much by they avow'd Enemies, as by thy false Friends*

*Friends and treacherous Disciples :  
And no less Hard hath been the Fate  
of thy most excellent Religion ; that  
an Institution so Divine in its  
Principles, so noble in its Ends,  
and so excellent in all its Parts ; a  
Religion that is so great a Friend  
to the Comfort of a Man's Life here,  
and his everlasting Happiness here-  
after, should yet be run down by  
every Bold and Trifling Wit, and  
treated after the most Unworthy  
and Disingenuous manner by those  
very persons, who have vow'd and  
sworn all Obedience thereunto ; and  
to do it, as some have done, with a  
Spite and Malice infinite beyond  
that of a Jew, and exceeding the  
Barbarity of a very Heathen.*

A piece of Guilt this is, which is  
too big for Expression, too black  
for Excuse, and no doubt will at  
last meet with a Punishment wor-  
thy of it. And therefore of such  
Mens Company and Conversation

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you cannot be too Shy, nor too Cautious : *My Soul, come not thou into their Secrets, unto their Assemblies be not thou united,* Gen. 49. 6.

'Tis every ones Interest then who hath any reverence for Religion, any regard to or belief of a *Future State*, to be aware of such Men and their Communication, as they would of Poyson in their meat and drink ; to take heed of being *tainted* by their ill Principles and corrupt Practices, whereby they lye in wait to deceive, and endeavour to make Others as bad as themselves, and by both to ruine and destroy Souls. And for this reason we cannot be too earnest and sollicitous in pressing upon you the Advice of the Wise Man, Prov. 1. *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not : walk not thou in the way with them ; refrain thy foot from their path :* for, Chap

5. 5. *Their end is bitter as worm-wood, as sharp as a two-edged Sword : their Feet go down to DEATH, their Steps take hold of HELL Fires.*

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DISCOURSE II.

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THE  
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2 Tim. 2. 19.

*Let every one that nameth the Name  
of Christ depart from Iniquity.*

I S- **T**O pass over the Connection of  
the Words, I shall consider  
them as a distinct and entire Pro-  
position by themselves; the full  
sense and meaning whereof I shall  
give

give you, in the opening of these following Particulars.

1. What is here meant by *naming the Name of Christ*.

2. What we understand by *Iniquity*, or in what Sense it is here taken.

3. Lay before you the *Obligation* that lies upon all *Christians* to the practice of this Advice of the Apostle in the Text, namely, to *repent of and forsake all Sin* as much as it is possible.

4. The useful Improvement we ought to make of the whole.

I. What is here meant by naming *the Name of Christ*.

Briefly, as the Name of *Christ* is sometimes used in Scripture for his *Faith* and *Doctrine*,<sup>1</sup> as appears from several Places in the *Acts* and other Passages of Holy Writ ; so to *name the Name of Christ* may signify one or both of these Things ; either to *make profession* of his Faith and *believe* the Truth of his Doctrine as laid down and revealed in the Gospel :

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Gospel : Or else it may imply our being *denominated*, or receiving our Appellation from his Sacred Name ; and so comprehends all those who have the Name of *Christ* imposed upon them, and wear it as their proper *Badge* and *Symbol* to distinguish them from the rest of the Profane and Unbelieving World.

In short , hereby is meant All Those who are *called Christians* ; who have been *Baptized* into the Name and Faith of *Christ*, been Instituted and Brought up in the *Knowledge* and *Belief* of his Religion. All which are here meant by the Apostle, and obliged in Virtue of this Name to *Depart from all Iniquity*.

Now as to *name the Name of Christ*, taking it for the *Profession* of his Faith, is a *Christians Duty*, so to be *Denominated* and called by his Name is our highest Honour and chiefest Glory, whereof no Man ought to be ashamed.

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The Name of *Christian* is a *high* and *Honourable* Appellation, a *Sacred and venerable* Title, and therefore not to be prostituted to any base and unworthy Designs, nor yet dishonoured by a Vicious and Debauched Practice; but this *Name* ought to put us in mind of our *Duty*, and engage us to be, not *Nominal* Professors only, but *real* Followers and Disciples of our Lord and Master, who has given us an *Example* as well as *Rule* that we should walk in his steps.

2. What understand we by *Iniquity*? The original Word *adikia* may be considered in a three-fold Sense or Meaning.

1. Take it in its most *Narrow* and *Contracted* Sense, and then it signifies *Injustice* or wrong dealing, which is the *Injurious* Defrauding a person of his proper *Right* and *Due*. A thing in it self absolutely *unlawful*, and therefore *forbidden* Christians by their

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Religion, who are obliged to the Practice of the *strictest* Justice and Honesty both in their Words and Dealings. But more than this is intended here.

2. Take the Word somewhat more largely; and it implies all *Unrighteousness*, and is of the same Latitude or Extent with the violation of the Table comprehending the whole System of Morality, or that Branch of our Duty which more immediately respects our Neighbour. But,

3. Consider the Word in its Fullest and Largest Sense, and then it Denotes *any sort* of *Sin* or *Wickedness* whatsoever. *ἁμαρτία* thus considered is of equal extent with *ἁμαρτία*, with the breach of the whole or any part of the Divine Law. And thus largely we shall here handle it: for the Apostle doth not restrain his Assertion to some particular Sins only; but extends it to the whole Body

of Sin in general, whereby 'tis apparent the *Prohibition* is *Universal*.

*Sin* then, *all Sin*, is here forbidden Christians, be it great or small, open or secret, be it in thought, word or deed, either against God or Man, against our own Bodies or Souls ; *for the Grace of God, which brings Salvation and has appeared to all Men, teacheth us to deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and to live soberly righteously and Godly in this present World*, Tit. 2. 11, 12.

But more particularly ; if all Sin is here forbidden, then this prohibition includes more especially, and in the first place,

1. All great and grievous Crimes ; all open and notorious Impieties, which carry Scandal and Reproach, Infamy and Dishonour in the very name and mention thereof. A large Catalogue whereof is given by the Apostle, Gal. 5. 19. Eph. 5. 3, 4. Rom.

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*Rom. 1. 29. 2 Tim. 3. 2, &c.* To which Places I refer you for the particulars; the chief whereof are *Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Witchcraft, Sedition, Heresies, Murder, Drunkenness, Covetousness, Fraud, Deceit, Unbelief, Idolatry, Maliciousness, Envy, Idolaters, Traytors, False-Accusers, Covenant-Breakers, Inventers of Evil things, Despisers of those that are good, Disobedient to Parents, without Natural Affection, Implacable, Unmerciful, and finally whatsoever worketh Abomination and loveth or maketh a Lie, Rev. 21. ult.*

All which are Crimes of a very Gross and *Scandalous* Nature, how light soever any of us may make of them; they are of a deeper Dye and blacker Hew than the common Frailties and Infirmities of Humane Nature, and are therefore absolutely forbidden Christians as Dishonourable to their Profession, and Destructive to their future

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Hopes and Expectation, namely, while they are persisted in and unrepented of.

For tho' the Apostle tells us, all shall be *Damned who believe not the Truth, but take pleasure in Unrighteousness*, 2 *Thess.* 2.12. Yet there are some Sins, which by reason of their heinous Guilt, horrid Circumstances and Aggravations, are more provoking to God and affronting to Religion than others; and therefore shall receive (as our Saviour told the *Pharisees*) *ἡ ἀποτίμησις ἡ μεγάλη*, a more exceeding great Damnation, and be punished in a far more Severe and Exemplary manner.

Of this Nature are those open and profligate Impieties before-mentioned, many of which are taken notice of to be the *reigning* Guilt and Scandal of this present Age, and are in danger to seal Men up unto utter Ruine: concerning which I may apply that of the Apostle, 1

*Cor.*



*Cor. II. 14. Doth not Nature teach you the contrary ?*

Doth not *Nature* teach you, not only to believe and acknowledge a God (which yet is *Brutishly* denyed by some, and *Boastfully* disputed by others,) but likewise to pay all Reverence and Devotion unto that Sacred and Tremendous Majesty, who is the Maker of the World and Author of our Being ?

Doth not the Comfort, Ease and Happiness of this Life depend in a great Measure upon the Natural Duties of *Temperance* and *Chastity* towards our own Bodies, of *Justice* and *Charity* towards our Neighbour ; in *Moderating* the Violence of our *Passions* and subjecting them to the Government of Right Reason and a well-informed Understanding, which ought to direct all the inferior Motions and Appetites of our Souls ?

Doth not the *Interest* and Well-fare of *Publick Societies* oblige Men

to keep Faith and Promise one with another ; to live in Peace and walk in Love, to be mutually helpful and assisting to each other, *to provide and practice Things honest in the sight of all Men*, and in all respects *to do as they would be done by ?* For on this (saith our Saviour) hangs all the Law and the Prophets.

Many among the *Heathens* have learnt as much as this comes to, being taught by no other Light than that of Nature ; and therefore may justly put to the blush all those *Christians* who live far worse, tho' under a brighter Beam of Light and Knowledge.

A Chaste *Scipio*, a Just *Aristides*, a Religious *Numa*, a Virtuous *Socrates*, a *Regulus* firm and constant to his word, shall one day rise up in judgment and condemn the Profaneness and Irreligion, the Filth and Uncleaness, the Excess and Intemperance, the Perjury and breach of Faith, the Injustice and Oppression of such as call them-

themselves *Christians*, who having a more perfect Rule to walk by, yet choose to wander in those crooked Paths.

What a shame is it that *Christians* should wallow in those Vices which a Modest *Heathen* would blush to own ; and make boast of those abominable Impieties which *Nature* teacheth us to abhor and be out of Countenance for.

What Pity ? what Dishonour is it ? that Christians who have all the Helps and Encouragements to become the *Best* of Men and excel all the World beside, should yet Sink and Degenerate beneath the *Basest* and *Vilest* of Mankind ; and that by how much their *Religion* is better, by so much their *Lives* should be worse than those of Pagans and profest Infidels.

But to abstain from Impieties of this Nature is not enough ; wherefore, Secondly,

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2. By Virtue of this Prohibition in the Text, not only *gross Sins* are actually to be avoided, but *small Sins* likewise, even Sins of Infirmitie are to be Scrupled and Watched against.

Tho' these Latter cannot always be *Avoided* as the Former may and ought to be ; yet however they are by no means to be *Allowed* of or to be *Indulged in* under the Pretence of Natural Frailties and Infirmities, as is evident from that well-known place of the Apostle, *1 Thes. 5. 22. Abstain from all kind or Appearance of Evil* ; that is, from all Degrees and Approaches to it, as much as 'tis possible. And indeed we cannot press any thing more Strict upon our People than what the Apostle hath done in this place. For he makes it a Christians Duty to Forbear as much as in him lyes, whatever hath the *Shew or Resemblance* of a Sin.

For Christianity is (as St. James styles

styles it) a *Pure and Undesiled Religion* : 'Tis a *Nice and Tender* thing, and therefore obligeth all its Professors to the utmost Degree of *Holiness and Purity* they are capable of, to put away from them every thing that may *Offend* as well as *Defile*, to pull out not only the *Beam* but the *Mote* too : that is, to Watch against and Abstain from Lesser Sins and Infirmities, tho' the World may judge them Small and Inconsiderable, or perhaps not worth the taking notice of.

For Little Sins, if let alone and unregarded, may occasion a great deal of Pain and Uneasiness unto a Devout Mind and Tender Conscience, even as a little *Dust* or *Mote* may offend the *Eye*, which is a very tender Part, and sensible of the least thing that may do it an Injury.

All Sin therefore is to be avoided as much as 'tis possible ; our *Words*, as well *Actions*, are to be nar-



narrowly Watched and Observed ;  
*for by our Words we shall be justified,*  
*and by our Words we shall be condem-*  
*ned.*

Nay Sin in the very *Thought* and  
*Intention* is condemned by Christ,  
 and therefore to be scrupled by all  
 such as would approve themselves  
 to be his True and Faithful Disci-  
 ples ; For he calls all *rash Anger* and  
*unadvised Passion* by the Name of  
*Murder*, and *Lust* in the *Heart* is  
 forbidden by him under the Name  
 of *Adultery*.

The *Thoughts* are the inward Acts  
 and Operations of the Mind or Soul:  
 Sinful Purposes and Evil Imaginati-  
 ons are the first Steps and Degrees  
 unto all sorts of Wickedness, and  
 therefore, to be stifled in the Birth  
 and crushed in the Shell, and he  
 that stops not here, is in danger to  
 tumble down and precipitate him-  
 self to the very bottom of all Un-  
 godliness and Worldly Lusts.

*Little Sins*, how *Trifling* and In-  
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considerable soever they may appear when *single* and by themselves; yet like the *Plague of Lice and Locusts* in *Egypt*, become very dangerous by their *Numbers* and *Multitudes*. Pray what is Smaller than a Mote of *Dust* or Grain of *Sand*; and yet as small as they are, when many of them are collected together into a *Bank* or *Shoal*, they become as dangerous to a Ship as the vastest *Rock* that strikes terrour at a distance; in like manner smaller Sins by their great numbers and frequent Repetitions may prove as fatal to the Soul, as single Acts of a more heinous Nature.

Thus Vain and Frothy *Speech*, Filthy and Impure *Communication*, Little and Petty *Oaths*, Angry and Spiteful *Reproaches*, Rash and Censorious *judging* of others, too deep and Uncharitable *resentment* of Affronts and Injuries, Careless and frequent Surprises of *Passion*, a rough and surly *Treatment* of Persons, speak-

speaking fair to their Faces, lessening and *traducing* 'em behind their Backs, keeping up an inward *Grudge* or ill will against those that give us friendly Admonition and Reproof, Little *Cheats* and over-reaching in Trade, Wilful breaking of our *Words* and *Promises*, tho' in smaller matters; these and such like are *Failings* and Infirmities, which Christians very often fall into, and too many, I fear, allow themselves in, without being much concerned thereat. And tho' they do not by their *Single Acts*, so deeply plunge the Soul into Guilt as *grosser* and fouler Sins do; yet if let alone and suffered to pass unobserved, are apt to stain our Purity and soil our Innocence; and therefore by no means to be allowed of, much less *defended*, as many times they are, by the looser and less serious sort of People; who for that Reason give us too much Cause to suspect they are great Strangers to

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the *Power of Godliness*, tho' they may retain the outward *Form* of it, and are unacquainted with the Life and Spirit of true Christianity. But let vain people think what they will in this case, *We have not so Learned Christ*; for whatever is a Sin, or may be judged an Iniquity, be it *Great* or *Small*, every Christian by his Profession has already renounced it, and thereby is obliged to watch against it, and abstain from it as much as may be. Otherwise, as the Son of *Syrach* hath assured us, *he that despiseth Little things shall perish by Little and Little*, Eccl. 9. 19. 2. that is, insensibly and by degrees, through his own carelessness and inadvertency.

Thus little Sins become Dangerous and Hurtful to the Soul by their *Numbers* and multitude, and more especially they do so when they are committed,

First, through habitual *Carelessness* and *Inconsideration*, which a little care

care and Circumspection might have easily prevented.

Secondly, when they are *Wilful* and *Affected*; committed with Pleasure and Delight, made matter of Sport and Entertainment, and obstinately persisted in, even after Admonition and Reproof. For *Wilfulness* and *Obstinacy* are great Aggravations to the least Sins, alters their nature, and turns what of it self was but a natural *Infirmity* at first, into a Great and *Presumptuous* Offence.

Thirdly, when they are *justified* or *excused*, as being but Infirmities, and which God will not be severe in charging upon 'em. This indeed is true of such Infirmities as are naturally unavoidable, or which we fall into against our Wills, or merely thro' the surprise or violence of Temptation; but not of such as we do wilfully affect and accustom our selves unto, or which we take no manner of care to prevent or avoid.



void. For all Sins are displeasing to God, even in the smallest Instance of Guilt, and therefore every day we ought to Watch against 'em, and every night beg Pardon for 'em.

But if they are *neglected*, and suffered to *multiply* either through Carelessness or Presumption, they will gather by Degrees into vast Heaps, and unite into a Formidable Mass and Load of Guilt, which like a Bag of *Sand* hung about the Neck, may sink us as deep as the heaviest *Mill-stone*. Therefore we ought to Scatter and Disperse 'em by our daily Sighs and Tears, by our *Evening* Confessions and *Morning* Resolutions taken up against 'em. In the mean time, let us not forget to look up to God, and call in the Divine Grace to our Assistance, by frequent Petitions and devout *Ejaculations* put up ever and anon to this purpose, which may be done at any time of the day, tho' we be at work,  
or

or any hour of the night when we lye awake. By this means we shall avoid the commission of more and greater Sins ; will not allow nor justify our selves in the least, and may arrive at further measures and degrees of *Holiness* than we can hope to do without it.

3d. I come now to lay before you the indispensable *Obligation* which lyes upon all Christians to the leading of good and virtuous Lives, and avoiding whatever is opposite or contrary thereunto. And this upon several Accounts. / I shall name but three or four.

1. Because by doing otherwise, we shall *Defeat* all the Methods and Designs of Grace which have been imployed in Contriving and Accomplishing the great Work of our Redemption ; insomuch as *Christ Jesus will profit us nothing*.

Christ's Design in quitting Heaven and his Father's Bosom when he came into the World and took

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our Nature upon him, was not only to prevent its Misery and Destruction, but to *banish* out of it all that Wickedness and Rebellion which had generally overspread and threatned it with ruine. His Business was not only to *Redeem* but *Reform* Mankind; for which end he gave them a Perfect Pattern of all Virtue and Goodness in his own Person, and left them his Gospel, containing all those Sacred Laws and Heavenly Motives, which were sufficient to direct and encourage to a Holy Life.

The End of his Death likewise was not only to Keep us out of *Hell*, and Deliver us from Wrath to Come, but to *Redeem us from all Iniquity and Purifie to himself a Peculiar People Zealous of Good Works*, Tit. 2. 14. For which Reason he obtained the Name of *Jesus* or *Saviour*, because he was to *Save his people from their Sins*, Math. 1. 21. This being the Principal and Noblest Part

Part of our Redemption, the very Beginning and Earnest of our Salvation. For it was absolutely impossible (considering the Nature of things) that he should save us from Divine Wrath and Endless Misery, except he did first Redeem us from Iniquity, and save us from our Sins; *Namely*, from the defiling Guilt or reigning Power and Dominion thereof.

Herein consisted the Greatest Blessing of the New Covenant, and was a Design well worthy of the Son of God, who came, as the Apostle tells us, *Acts 3. 26. To bless us, in turning every one of us from our Iniquities.*

Consider yet farther, the Blood of Christ (called in Scripture the *Price of our Redemption*) that also hath a mighty Efficacy to this very end and purpose, as having a *Purifying* as well as *Expiating* Quality; being able not only to quench the Flames of Hell, and avert the Wrath of Almighty God; but likewise to cleanse

cleanse the Soul and wash it into a Lamb-like Innocency and Dove-like Complexion. And let the Sinner be well assured, except Christ doth thus *wash him*, he can have *no part* or Interest *in him*.

For though Heaven be called the *Purchased Possession*, as being the Price of our Saviour's Blood; yet none shall be admitted into its Blessed Mansions, but such as before-hand are duly qualified and prepared for it; namely who *cleanse themselves from all filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit*, and by *patient continuance in Well-doing seek for Glory, Honour, Immortality and Eternal Life*, Rom.2.7.

And therefore, so far as God hath revealed himself in his Word, and made known unto us the Terms of Salvation, nothing less than this, nothing instead of this, will be able to save us; for *without Holiness, no Man shall see the Lord*, Heb.

We have Reason then to believe, that the Divine Mercy, how Infinite



nite soever, will not save those that obstinately persist in a Wicked and Impenitent Course of Life ; that all the Merit that is in *Jesus* will never make satisfaction for that Person who continually adds Sin unto Sin and *treasures up Wrath against the Day of Wrath* ; that all the Blood, that Precious Blood of Christ (tho' of Infinite Value) can never wash that Soul clean, who with the Swine daily wallows in the Filth and Mire of a Lewd and Ungodly Life. For if we *sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin*, Heb. 10. 26. that is, the Sacrifice of Christs Death is made perfectly void to all that grow hardened in a State of Sin and Impenitency. And if they can expect no Benefit by that Sacrifice, 'tis in vain for them to look for any other. For there remains, saith the Apostle, *no more*, that is no other Sacrifice for such Mens Sins ; so that if this Sa-  
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crifice already offered will not do, they must not expect any other: And then what can they expect but a *certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries?* Heb. 10. 27.

From whence 'tis evident to all who will consider the Reason of things, and the Proposals of the Gospel, that there ought to be no comparison between the Condition of wicked, profane and impenitent *Christians*, with *that* of those unhappy People, who never heard of *Christ*, nor were made acquainted with the Glad Tidings of a Redeemer. Nay, it will be infinitely more tolerable even for *Publicans*, or *Heathen Sinners*, in the *Day of Judgment*, than for such *Christians*, who have abused greater measures of Light and Knowledge, and rejected wilfully more plentiful offers of Grace and Mercy than all the World besides.

2. Christians, or all they who are called

called by the *Name* of *Christ*, ought to depart from all Iniquity, because unto this they have already *bound* and *obliged* themselves. Every one of us at our *Baptism* did most solemnly resign and give up our selves to *Christ*, as his *Servants*, owning him for our *Master*; as his *Subjects*, owning him for our *Lord*; as his *Soldiers*, lifting our Names to fight under him as the *Captain of our Salvation*, and engaging our selves to a *Holy Warfare* against the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*.

Now this Vow of our *Baptism* is the highest Engagement and greatest Obligation unto Holiness imaginable, and we cannot forego it without contracting the most Black and Horrid Guilt upon our Souls: Every Act of Sin, knowingly and wilfully committed, is a high breach of this Promise, and calls for a deep and express Repentance.

Suppose any one should be so wicked as actually to *Renounce* and  
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*disown his Baptism*, by that Act he forfeits the very *Name* of Christian, ranks himself among the Number of profest Heathens and Infidels, and excludes himself from the Communion of Saints, and all the Blessed Priviledges belonging thereunto; For in this Sense 'tis a *Catholick* and Universal Truth, *out of the Church there is no Salvation.*

But if we do own our Baptism as all *actually* Do, who have been confirmed and admitted to the holy Sacrament; and all *Virtually* do, who Publickly retain the Profession of Christ's Religion.

Hereby we renew this Solemn Vow and Promise in our own Persons; we tye this knot the faster, and make the Obligation the stronger: Now for any one to do this and yet live in a State of Sin and Wickedness wholly opposite thereunto, is the greatest Aggravation to our Guilt, and Contradiction to our Profession imaginable; this is *in*

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*Words to profess we know God, but in our Works to deny him ; 'tis to be Verbal Christians, but Real Heathens, to deny the Faith, and be worse than an Infidel.*

And yet this is the Case of all Ungodly and Profane Christians, such I mean, as call themselves so ; they plainly renounce and deny in their Lives, whatever they have vowed and promised with their Mouths. They defile the Water of Baptism, wherein they have been washed and cleansed ; they break in sunder those Bonds, and cast away those Cords wherewith they have bound and obliged themselves to a holy life ; upon which account St Peter assures them, 2 Pet. 2. 22. *It had been better for them never to have known the ways of Righteousness, than after having known them to turn aside from the holy Commandment delivered unto them :* Better never to have heard of Christ or been Baptized in his Name, than after all to break their Faith with him, to violate the



their Promises and Engagement, and *Abjure* (as in effect they do) that Covenant of Grace and Mercy into which they were initiated at their Baptism.

You therefore that own your selves to be *Christians*, and still retain the Profession of it, you would do well to Review more frequently your *Baptismal* Covenant, to consider seriously what you have Vowed and Promised therein to Almighty God, and then be wicked if you *dare*, and deny all Obligation to a Holy Life, if you *can*; then you may Deride the Profession and Practice of Holiness, and scoff at such as endeavour to promote it in the World, if you can do it with Safety to your Souls, or without contradicting your own Solemn Vows and Protestations.

Whenever therefore you are tempted to Sin, or to do any thing inconsistent with your Christian Profession, remember *thy Vows are upon thee,*

*thee, O man, thy Vows are upon thee. You have been washed in the Laver of Regeneration, and therefore may say with the Spouse in the Canticles, I have washed my Feet, how can I defile them? and with Joseph, that rare Example of Modesty and Chastity, how can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God? Gen. 39. 9. against that God to whom I stand engaged by so many Sacred Tyes and Solemn Obligations.*

Remember you are *Christians*, and that you cannot be wicked at so cheap a rate as the rest of the World; your Guilt will not admit of such *Excuses* as that of Heathens and Strangers to Christianity, seeing, your Engagements to a Holy Life are much stronger and more Powerful than theirs.

3. Christ and his Religion doth suffer much and is greatly reproached for the ill Lives of those that make a Profession of it, 2 Pet. 2. 2. *And many shall follow their pernicious*

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*ous Ways, by reason of whom the way of Truth is evil spoken of.*

This was an early Grievance and Complaint in the Christian Church, which therefore made her very severe in her Discipline and Censures against all those, who by the wickedness and scandal of their Lives, gave Occasion to the Heathen, to speak ill of their Religion and reproach the Author of it.

For generally speaking, such formerly was the *Exemplary* Holiness and Piety of Primitive Christians that they became *Famous* to a *Proverb*, and were seldom mentioned by their Enemies but with respect and veneration: They rationally and truly inferr'd the Goodness and excellency of their Worship and Religion from the unblameable Lives of those who made a Profession of it.

But alas! *quantum mutamur ab illis?* What a mighty Change and alteration has happened in

the *Christian Church* since that time ! not for the *better*, God knows, but mightily for the *worse* : Every Age writing worse and worse after the Copy of the first ; insomuch as the generality of Christians are now become so unlike those of old time, that they are scarce to be known or distinguished from very *Heathens* themselves, but only by a better Name and worser Lives than they ; and are grown so corrupt and degenerate in their practice, that they are a down-right Scandal and Dishonour to that very Name which they yet retain and make profession of.

Nay, those that have the ordinary Repute among us now for being Devout and Religious ; yet if compared to the *Primitive* Heat and Vigour of Antient Piety, would have passed but for very Cold and *Luke-warm* Christians in those Days. 'Tis not my observation only, but of some of the most *Learned and Pious* of our own Church.

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The Honour which our Fam'd and Heroick Predecessors gained to their Religion could not be greater than the Dishonour which is now cast upon it through the loose Conversation of Modern Christians. Suppose then an *Infidel* or *Heathen* should come among us, which way could he judge of our Religion, but by the Lives of its Professors? and then what Judgment do you think would he make in the Case? how could we persuade him that we truly believe what we make so great a shew and profession of, or that we own the Gospel for more than a *Fable*, unless we make it the Rule of our Practice, and accordingly frame the Tenour of our Lives.

But according to the Lives that are now led by the greater part among us, they must needs cry out with him in *Erasmus*, either *the Gospel we profess is none of Christs*, or *we that profess it are not Christians*, are none of his true Followers and



Disciples ; and I am pretty well assured there is none of us all, but must agree to the truth of the latter, namely, that Christians now a days are not Christians according to the *Principles* of the Gospel and the first rate of Christians in the Apostles Days and the Age immediately succeeding theirs.

Doth it not therefore mightily concern us to amend our Lives and reform our Practice, that we may take off this Reproach which is too well grounded to be denyed ; that we may regain if possible, the *lost Honour* of Christianity, and retrieve that Credit which once it had in the World ?

And which way can this be done, but by *departing from iniquity*, which is the Shame of Christians and Scandal of Christianity, by living more exactly conformable to the Divine Law of our Blessed Redeemer, by making more Conscience of our Words and Actions, Dealings and Conuersation in the World, by keeping more strictly to our *Baptis-*  
mal

*mal* Vow and Promise, and labouring after a farther measure and higher degree of Holiness than yet we have attained.

4. And, Lastly ; Christians are obliged to depart from Iniquity under the greatest *Penalty* ; for both Law and Gospel deliver wicked Men over to *Everlasting Torments*, and threaten an *Eternity of Punishment* to all that live Ungodly.

I need not multiply Texts to prove this, it being the Language both of the *Old and New Testament* ; of the New especially, which is very exprefs to this Purpose : for 'tis said, *Matth. 25. ult. the Wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the Righteous into Life eternal* : And again, *2 Theff. 1. 7. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, taking Vengeance on all them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from*

*the presence of the Lord, and the Glory of his Power.*

This is what God has threatned to the Wicked and Ungodly, to the Impenitent and Unreclaimed; and no reason to think but God will be as good ~~as~~ his Word, as faithful and true in the *Execution* of his *Threatnings*, as in the *Fulfilling* of his *Promises*: for *God is not a Man that he should lie, nor as the Son of Man that he should Repent, Numb. 13.*

We are told before-hand, that God will *judge the World according to the Gospel of his Son, Rom. 2. 16.* And if so, then let the Wicked and Profane look into the Gospel, and see if they can find the least Jot or Word of Comfort, while they go on in their Sins, have their Hearts set upon the World, and are bewitched with the *Lusts and Pride and Vanities* thereof; while they lay aside the serious Thoughts of Religion, throw off all care of their Souls, and put off their Repentance from Day to Day. For

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For certain, there is not one *Pro-  
mise* throughout the whole Book of  
God for such as these to build their  
hopes upon, and that Man who  
shall live and die without a Pro-  
mise to comfort and support him  
in his Distress, or to ground and  
anchor his dying Hopes upon, I  
think his Condition so very sad and  
deplorable, that he wants no-  
thing but the Fatal Stroke to enter  
him upon his Everlasting Doom.

For if such Ungracious and Im-  
penitent Wretches are like to be-  
come the Objects of God's *Mercy*,  
pray who then shall be the Objects of  
his *Wrath*? if the most Wicked and  
Profane, who go on to harden them-  
selves in their Wickedness, may  
cherish any Hopes of Heaven,  
what kind of Sinners must they be  
who are like to Crowd Hell, and  
fill up the Regions of the bottom-  
less Pit? If such *hardened Clay* and  
*Reprobate Silver* are fit to make  
*Vessels of Honour prepared unto Glo-*



ry, pray of what *Mold* shall they be made who are *Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction* ?

To speak plain, and yet, I hope, the *words of Truth, and Soberness* ; if ever any are excluded Heaven (as some for certain will be) be sure *Wicked and Impenitent Christians will be the Persons* ; because their Sin and Guilt is infinitely greater and more heinously circumstantiated than that of all the World beside, as having all the Helps and Assistances, Motives and Encouragements to make themselves Happy and escape the Damnation of Hell ; but how shall they escape, who wilfully neglect so great Salvation ?

The People of *Sodom*, we have reason to believe from the dreadful Punishment inflicted on them, were some of the worst of Men and greatest of Sinners at that time on the face of the whole Earth ; and yet it shall be more tolerable for the *Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah* in the

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the Day of Judgment, than for you, saith our Saviour to the unbelieving and impenitent Jews; the same reason will hold good in respect of wicked and profane Christians; it shall be more tolerable for *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* than for them; they shall have more hopes of Salvation, or at least undergo less degrees of Punishment than such as you; for impenitent Guilt and unreclaimed Wickedness will necessarily make Men miserable, be they who they will; and the greater measure of Guilt will bring upon them the greater weight of Misery, and no outward Relation or external Priviledges will be able to prevent it.

I come now in the fifth and last place,

5th. To make some improvement of this, by bringing it more home to our selves.

I. With respect to the Name of *Christ* and *Christians*: Let us glory in the Name and Profession of being Christians, and prefer this honourable Title before all other.

We

We have a great many Names and Distinctions of Parties to be known by, and divide us one from another, while this of *Christian* is in a manner Antiquated and out of date, lost and forgotten with the Practice of it. We have *Protestants* of all sorts and sizes, Titles and Denominations; while, I fear were their *Lives* and *Actions*, their *Principles* and *Practices* narrowly inspected and looked into, we should find but *few*, comparatively few good and genuine Christians among them all. And yet, in truth, there cannot be a greater Scandal and Reproach to *Protestants*, as such (who all enjoy the inestimable Blessing of the Scriptures in their own Language) than for them to sin against that Light, and to take those Measures, and assume those Liberties, which Christ forbids his Disciples, as inconsistent with their Profession, and which can never be reconciled to the known Laws and standing Rules of the Gospel, which are the very same now as they were at first, and as strictly obliging in  
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this Age as in that of the Apostles ; otherwise I do not see how it can be a *Rule of Life and Salvation* to us, as it was to them.

Let a Man appear but warm and zealous for a particular *Señ* and *Party*, and he shall be cryed up for a *good Protestant* by those of his own Persuasion, though he has scarce any thing of the Christian in him, very little of a primitive Temper and Christian-like Spirit and Disposition to answer his Name.

I wish therefore that all *rending and dividing* Names were laid aside by good men of all *Parties*, and that we would content our selves with that of *Christian* instead of them : would to God there were no other *Characters* to distinguish Professors by, but that which will distinguish them at the last day ; namely, that of *good and bad Men*, of the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*, of such as fear God, and those that fear him not. That as there is but

*one*

*one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Saviour* of us all, so there might be but *one Name* among us all, viz. this of *Christian*: a Name not of Faction and Division, as most others are; but of the greatest Obligation to Love and Charity, to Peace and Unity, which are greatly wanting in our Church and State.

This Name would put us in mind of our *Relation* to Christ and one another, how that we are all *Brethren*, Members of the same Body, Disciples of the same Lord and Master, Professors of the same Faith and Religion, wherein we all agree as to the main Doctrines and Fundamentals, which we all acknowledge to be necessary and sufficient to Salvation, and then why not to Christian Peace and Communion, or at least to Brotherly *Love and Affection* one toward another.

In a word, this most *Sacred* and *endearing* Name, if lived up to the Import and Meaning thereof, would oblige

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oblige us to greater *Purity of Life*, *Universal Charity* towards our Fellow Christians, and a nearer Conformity and Resemblance to Christ our Head, as taking our Name from him, into whom at first we were Baptized, and which is the only *Name under Heaven by which we can hope to be saved*, Acts 6. 12.

But alas! though our *Name* is *Christian*, our *Doctrine* *Primitive*, and our *Religion Reformed*; yet our *Lives*, for the most part, are nothing so, which might afford sufficient matter of Complaint and Lamentation: Wherefore, in the Second place,

2. We have too great reason to lament and bewail the great Decay of the True Spirit of Christianity among us, and that mighty Corruption and Degeneracy of Mind and Manners which hath succeeded in the room thereof. There is too much cause to assume the Apostles

Corr -



Complaint of old, that *the whole World lies in Wickedness*, 1 John. 5. 19. let me add, especially that *part of it* which is called *Christian*. If we consider what a Spirit of *Atheism* and *Profaneness* *Uncleanness* and *Intemperance*, *Cursing* and *Swearing*, and *Forswearing*, *Pride* and *Avarice*, *Envy* and *Revenge*, *Faction* and *Sedition*, *Corruption* and *Bribery*, and many more such like *Enormities*, do overspread the Face of our Land, and blemish both the Reformation of our Church and the Excellency of her Doctrine.

Little of *Ancient* and *Apostolical* Religion to be found among the many Zealous and Contending Parties for it on all hands : The Heat of our Zeal hath put out that of our Charity ; and the great Privilege of being Christians hath made us almost forget the *Duties* and *Obligations* annexed thereunto : An Argument Men are more concern'd for the *Name* than the *thing*, otherwise

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they would not take up so contentedly with the one, without the other, with the Shadow of Religion instead of the Substance.

The Works of the Flesh are every Day manifest and walk in Publick, while the *Fruits of the Spirit*, like its *Nature*, become invisible and hard to be seen ; so that (as I hinted before) should a Stranger come among us, and enquire after our Religion, were it not Writ in our Bibles, we should not be able to prove there is any such thing as Christianity in the World ; or rather might not Prejudice oppose such an Enquiry, by thinking the *Rule* we walk by, to be as crooked as the *Paths* we walk in ; for Iniquity, instead of being departed from, is not only practised, but prided in ; and they that *Name the Name of Christ*, Glory in that which is his chiefest Dishonour. Sin, which is called by the Wise Man a *Reproach*, is become the *Pride* and *Gallantry* of

of our depraved Wits and early-corrupted Youth, who seem to value themselves on their Excesses and Debaucheries, as if they were the *better Men* for becoming the *worst Christians*.

The Religion of Christ suffers by the same Degrees as the Author of it did at first ; for with the Disciples, we not only forsake and flee from it, but with *Peter* we deny it ; and not only deny it, but with *Judas* betray it ; and not only betray it, but with the *Priests* condemn it ; and not only condemn it, but with the *Soldiers*, we mock and deride it ; a piece of Guilt that our *Ingenious* and Better-bred Men are frequently charged withal ; I would to God there were less cause given for it by them, or any other.

'Tis reported, that among the *Italians*, the Name of *Christian* passeth for a *Fool* ; and truly amongst us the Practice of Primitive Christianity

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anity is look upon as little better : For who is more Vilified and Reviled, more Scorned and Derided than a *Regularly Pious* and Good Man ? and he that makes most Conscience of his Ways is usually made choice of by the *Scoffing* and *Profane*, as the fittest Subject of their Sport and Merriment, of their Slander and Calumny.

Thus Christians are reproach'd by Christians ; and, as I may say, persecuted by each other in their Names and Reputations, and the Followers of the *Holy Jesus* suffer mostly from those who are, or appear to be, at least, of the *same* Faith and Profession with themselves. Therefore they that would be Christians according to the Standard of the Gospel, and Old-Fashioned Piety of the Primitive Age, must do as God bid the Prophet, Ezek. 3. 9. *Fear not, neither be dismayed at their looks :* that is, not be afraid of the Frowns or Reproaches of any person in so good a cause.

But



But do they deserve so excellent a Name, whose Manners and Practices are so directly contrary? Shall we judge those to be *Christians*, who like *Ishmael*, are not only *Bad* themselves, but *Scoff* at whatever is *Good* and *Serious* in others? 'Tis pity that they who embrace *Dunghils* should wear *Scarlet*; that Persons of such *Wicked* and *Profane Lives* should be Honoured with the Appellation of so *Sacred a Name*. For if these be *Christians*, who are *Heathens*? if these be *Friends to Christ*, who are his *Foes*? if these be *Disciples*, pray who are *Devils*? a Name given by our Saviour to *Judas*, tho' one of the Twelve. To this purpose there is a memorable Passage in *Venerable Bede*, concerning *Penda* King of the *Mercians*, or *Midland English*, that 'tho he was a cruel Persecutor of Christians, yet, saith the Historian, it was of such only as bore the Name of Christian, but lived not according to the Faith and

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and Religion they profess ; saying, that such Persons were the most despicable Wretches and worthy of all Scorn and Contempt, who never regarded to serve and please that God in whom they Believed.

And truly, tho' a *Pagan*, he was much in the right ; for such Men deserve to become the Hatred and Scorn both of God and Man, as being the very *worst* of Men, living in defiance to the *best* of Religions, and guilty of the greatest Absurdity and Contradiction in the World. *Bede. l. 3. C. 21. Eccles. Hist.*

3. The Obligation that lies upon us to depart from Iniquity and Follow after Universal Holiness is so great and necessary, that Nothing *less* than this, Nothing *instead* thereof, will serve our turn, or be able to constitute us True and Real Christians.

1. Not any *Specious Shew* or *Outward Profession* will do it, because  
all

all Profession relates to Practice, and signifies Nothing without it. It is not farther good or Necessary, than it doth oblige us to a Life answerable and correspondent to what we profess; without this 'tis nothing but Gross and Notorious Hypocrisie in the sight of God.

2d. Again, *good Wishes* and Intentions, *Religious Purposes* and Resolutions taken up against Sin, profit nothing without an actual leaving and forsaking of it. No Man can be said to Mean or Intend well, who doth not take the first Opportunity of performing what he purposes, and putting his Intentions into practice. Neither,

3d. Will a *Bare Faith* or Naked Belief be able to supply the Defect of Righteousness and True Holiness, nor avail any thing where Sin is not actually forsaken, and a good Life really begun and vigorously pursu'd.

We may upon the Authority of St.

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St. *James*, safely infer the *Deadness* and Invalidity of that Faith which is sepearate from *Good Works* or Obedience to the Commands of the Gospel ; and this he confirms by an extraordinary Instance of the *Devils* themselves. For the *Devils*, saith he, *Believe* ; and yet their Condition is never the better for this Faith of theirs, which therefore makes them *Tremble* to think, that notwithstanding all that they know and believe of God, their Estate is like to continue Hopeless and Desperate for Ever.

Now for the same reason, the Wicked and Ungodly, the Profane and Impenitent among us ought to Tremble and be Affraid, considering that their Condition will be never the Better for all their Knowledge, Belief, and Outward Profession of Christ, while sepearate from a Good Life ; but is like to prove equally Wretched and Miserable with that of the Apostate Angels.

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True

True Christian Faith is, I acknowledge, a Noble Grace and of Admirable use to a Christian, the very Life and Comfort of the Soul, and a mighty Support to it in Time of Affliction and Distress ; but then *Faith* is said to be truly Christian and able to Administer Firm and Solid Comfort to the Soul, when it *Purifies the Heart*, Reforms the Life, *Overcomes the World*, and is *careful to maintain Good Works*, that is, a Constant and Uniform measure of Holiness and Obedience to the Commands of God our Saviour.

I shall conclude this whole Discourse on the fourth place,

4. By way of Advice and Exhortation ; to which purpose let me Reinforce and Press upon you this Apostolical Injunction in the Text, *Let every one that names the Name of Christ depart from Iniquity* ; what more necessary, what more Reasonable and Becoming Christians than this ?

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The name of *Christ* and *Christi-  
an*, I have told you, is Sacred and  
Honourable ; oh ! do not then Re-  
proach it by your Ungodly Walk-  
ing, but Answer that Holy Name  
by a Life suitable thereunto. If you  
think your Religion is *Bad*, Lay  
down the Profession of it ; but if it  
be *Good*, Take up the Practice with  
the Profession ; but have a care you  
do not separate the Name from the  
Thing : what *God hath joyned toge-  
ther, let no Man put asunder.*

Christians, tho' they should be  
Lowly in Mind and *Poor in Spirit*,  
yet ought not to be so Abject and  
Mean-Spirited as to do any thing  
Unworthy of, Unsuitable to, or In-  
consistent with the Dignity of their  
*High Calling* and most *Holy Professi-  
on*. Tho' they should have Humble  
and Vile Thoughts of themselves,  
yet withal they should think them-  
selves too Good, too Great, to be-  
come *Drudges* to the World, *Slaves*  
to their Lusts, and *Vassals* to the  
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Empire and Prince of Darknes,  
because Christ hath called us unto  
Holiness, and *made us Kings and  
Priests unto God, to Reign with him  
for ever and ever.*

*Nomen congruat Actioni, Actio re-  
spondeat Nomini.* Ambros. de Dign-  
nit. Sacerdot. Let your Name then  
put you in mind of your Duty :  
Let your Practice Correspond to  
your Profession, and after so long  
a time of being *Called Christians*, re-  
solve now to Live like them.

Seriously consider and sincerely  
answer the Dignity of that *Holy  
Name* by which you are called :  
Rest not in a bare Form and Out-  
side of Religion, in a meer shew and  
Appellation of Christianity, but let  
the Life and Power thereof visibly  
Shine forth in your Actions and  
Conversations, that Men seeing your  
good Works, may Glorifie God on  
your behalf.

Briefly, *cease to do Evil, and learn  
to do Well* : Labour to cleanse

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*your Selves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit and Perfect Holiness in the Fear of God, 2 Corin. 7.*

*1. Let that Grace of God which brings Salvation and hath appeared to all Men, teach you to deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and to live Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this Present World; Looking for that Blessed Hope and the Glorious Appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Tit. 2. 11, 12, 13. I shall conclude all with the Advice of the Apostle Phil. 4. 8. Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are True, whatsoever Things are Honest, whatsoever Things are Just, whatsoever Things are Pure, whatsoever Things are of Good Report, if there be any Virtue, and Praise, Think on these Things and Do them. Now to as many as walk according to these Rules, Peace be on them and Mercy, and upon the whole Israel of God. Gal. 6. 16.*

Now to God the Father, Son and

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Holy

Holy Ghost, be Universally ascribed  
by Men and Angels, by the whole  
Host of Heaven and Earth, all Glo-  
ry, Honour and Adoration, all  
Might, Majesty and Dominion,  
Now, Henceforth and for Evermore.  
*Amen, Amen, Amen.*

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DISCOURSE III.

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TO THE  
WILL of GOD.

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ACTS 21. 14.

*The Will of the Lord be done.*

**I**N this and the foregoing Chapter  
you have a particular Account of  
St. Paul's Travels, who after he had  
visited many Churches, arrived at  
length at *Cæsarea* a City of *Palestine*,

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where

where *Agabus* a Prophet foretold the Sufferings that should befall him at *Jerusalem*, from his Countrymen the Jews. And this he did, as the Prophets of old were wont to do, by a visible sign, or Symbolical Representation, taking *Paul's* Girdle and binding himself therewith: in which action he Alluded to the Nature of his Sufferings, signifying thereby how that Bonds and Imprisonments did abide him at *Jerusalem*.

Upon this the Brethren did what they could to dissuade him from his Journey, and prevent his going up to that City: but such was the great Zeal and mighty Courage of our Apostle, that he was no ways Daunted at the News of his Sufferings, but turned a deaf Ear to their most pressing Importunities. He was so far from laying aside the thoughts of his Journey at *Agabus's* Prediction or the Disciples Intreaty, that on the contrary he declares his

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Resolution not only to go up to, but suffer at *Jerusalem*; and to suffer not only Bonds and Imprisonments, as the Prophet had foretold, but even *Death* it self, for *Christs* sake and the Gospels.

For our Apostle knowing he was Called of God in an Extraordinary manner, to be a Minister and Witness of those things which he had seen and heard at his Miraculous Conversion, and to suffer great things for his Name, *Acts* 9. *Ver.* 15. 16. He, like a Valiant Champion and Faithful Soldier of Christ, was ready to hazard himself even to the Death; saying, I am ready *not o ly to be Bound, bnt also to Dye at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus*, v. 13. The Disciples hereupon finding they could not prevail, ceased to perswade him any further, and having in an humble manner Recommended him to God, they submitted to the Good Will and Pleasure of the Almighty, who had

determined otherwise concerning him, saying, *The Will of the Lord be done.*

Which Words are an eminent Instance of Submission and Resignation to the Will of God, wherein every Good Christian ought to Acquiesce, and calmly Repose without any further Murmuring and Discontent.

From these words I shall shew you.

1. What is here meant by the *Will of God.*

2. What it is to *Submit* unto it.

3. What Arguments or Considerations may offer themselves to persuade us to this Duty.

4. Some Advice upon the whole.

I. What we understand here by the Will of God.

1. The Will of God is sometimes taken for his *Revealed Will*, which he hath made known to us, in and by

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by his Word ; in which sense 'tis used, *Matth. 7. 21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven ;* that is, who doth the Will of God in point of Obedience and Conformity thereunto.

2. The Will of God is also taken for his *Decree* or Purpose concerning Men ; or, to speak more plain, for all the Acts and Instances of his *Providence*. Now whatever doth or may befall us in the whole course of our Lives, we call the Will of God in this sense, as taken for the Disposals of his Providence, because Nothing falls out but according to his Appointment and Determination.

And in this sense is the Will of God to be understood in the Text, *viz. For all the Dispensations of his Wise Providence, which are the Tokens of his Will and Pleasure concern-*

cerning us. In this respect therefore the Will of the Lord ought to be *done*, that is, patiently born and *submitted* unto. The former, that enjoyns Obedience to his VVill, the Latter requires Patience under it. The *one* chiefly presses us to the *Doing*, but the other calls us to the *Suffering* of his Will, or a patient bearing thereof and Submission to it.

And of this latter we are now to treat, as chiefly intended in the Text, *The will of the Lord be done*. And thus must we do and say when the case comes to be our own, as here it was St. *Pauls* and the Disciples; make Gods Will ours, submit to what we cannot avoid, where it is a Sin to Murmur and Complain, a Folly to Resist or Oppose.

2ly. What it is to submit to the Will of God.

*Ans.* Submission here is to be considered either in opposition to *Murmuring* and *Repining*, outragi-

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ous Passion or Discontent ; or else, *2ly.* as 'tis opposed to the use of *Unlawful Means* to bring about our designs ; or get rid of Trouble ; for the *Doing of Evil that Good may come of it*, is a thing expressely condemned by the Apostle, *Rom. 3. 8.* and utterly inconsistent with the Principles of Christianity, and in particular with this of Submission and Resignation to the Holy Will of God.

To submit therefore to the Will of God in general is this : not to *Murmur* or *Repine* against Divine Providence, or think *Hard* thoughts of our Maker, as if he were unjust or Severe in his Dealings or Dispensations towards us : Not to be *Discontented* with out Estate, or Grieve *immoderately* for the want or Loss of any outward Comfort or Worldly Advantage : nor yet to Afflict our selves out of measure for any thing that may befall us in this World, whether it respects that of our own Private Concern or those  
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of the Publick : But to bear whatever God shall Inflict, with *Patience* and *Moderation*, and to want whatever God shall Deny us, with *Cheerfulness* and *Content* ; and in the Moderate use of Just and Lawful Means to refer our selves entirely to God's wise Conduct and Sovereign Dispose, as becomes Creatures who have their Being and Dependance wholly upon him, and from whom they receive All that they do Enjoy. This is, in short, to Submit to the Will of God.

Now in order to this, let me offer you some Considerations, which if seriously Weigh'd and Attended unto, may obtain the force of strong and powerful Arguments unto this Great Necessary Christian Duty : A Duty so very *Necessary*, as without which we cannot please God or enjoy our selves, without which we can find no Relief or Comfort in any Condition, and indeed are not fit to *Live in the World* ; in a World  
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subject to such Different Changes and Vicissitudes, exposed to such a Multitude and Variety of Misfortunes as every day doth give us Experience of in one kind or other.

And therefore in the 3<sup>d</sup>. place,

3<sup>ly</sup>. What are those Considerations which may enforce the Doctrine of the Text, and perswade us to the practice of so Necessary and Important a Duty ?

1. There is a great deal of Reason for us to submit to the Will of God in every Condition of Life, as well in Adversity as Prosperity, because he is *Wiser* than we are, and knows Better how to Choose for us, than we do for our selves.

We are all of us a company of Weak and Shallow Creatures, subject to Errour and Mistake, to pursue shadows and fall in love with outsides and Appearances, instead of  
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Substance and Reality : but God, who sees further than we do, from the Beginning to the End of Things, at once knows what is most fit and proper for us ; and therefore will choose nothing but what shall be so, tho' we may be apt out of small Judgment and Discretion to think otherwise for the Present.

'Tis possible we may need *Physick* instead of *Food*, and the *Disease* may be such as cannot easily be cured, but in a Method somewhat *Unpleasant* and *Distasteful* to us at first : but what matter, tho' it please not the palate of our *Sickly* and *Distempered* Minds, so it prove the more *Wholesome* and *Healthful* to our Souls. That which pleased the Palate is oft-times injurious to Health, and that Condition which gratifies most the sensual Appetite and lower Passions, may Endanger our *Virtue* and stain our *Innocence* ; and therefore God oftentimes shews more of Kindness in denying, than gratifying our Requests,

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How often would some Mens Wishes, if granted, have proved their *ruine*? like that of *Rachel* who was so passionately desirous of Children, as with Rashness to cry out, *Give me Children or else I Die*, *Gen. 30. 1.* and it fell out accordingly, for she was no sooner able to Number Children, which she brought into the World, but she Dies indeed: For by giving Life to her Second Son, she lost her own. The like we may take notice of in the *Israelites* Murmuring for Flesh in the Wilderness and Longing after Quails; which being sent, proved a *Curse* to those that Longed after 'em, and instead of Food, proved as bad as Poyson: For, *Psalms 78. 30. While the Meat was yet in their Mouths, the Wrath of God came upon them, and smote down the chosen Men of Israel.*

Alas, so very Children we are,  
that



that many times we ask a *Serpent* instead of a *Fish*, and *Rank Poyson* instead of *Daily Bread* and Necessary Food. Now 'tis Kindness in our Maker to disapprove our choice in such Instances of Rashness and Folly; and tho' we may be cross'd therein, we have no reason to be Angry with God or Quarrel with his Providence, because he doth it out of love, and 'tis many times our Interest for him so to do.

We know not well how to Choose for our Selves, and therefore are not fit to become our own Carvers; for oft-times we make the *worst* choice when we think it the *best*: as *Lot* being left by *Abraham* to his liberty where he wou'd plant himself, chooseth the *Planes of Sodom*, which indeed lookt Pleasant, and seemed to be a Sweet Seat and Delightful Habitation, but was in truth a sink of Sin and all Impurity, and for their filthy Wickedness soon after Destroyed by Fire from Heaven: the

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the *Emblem* too often of a Worldly, Prosperous and Flourishing Estate, which is ever attended with great Snares, and innumerable Dangers. We seldom like the Station wherein God hath placed us, or are contented with the Condition to which he hath fixed us down, and this makes our Hearts to *fret* and *murmur against the Lord*. We are Troubled and Dissatisfied because the Providence of God hath not removed us *Higher*, and put us where we would be ; and where that is we know not well our selves. We would have something and *Better* than we have, and are froward and out of Humour, because we have it not ; tho' what that is, we are many times at a loss to tell : And hence ariseth our Errour and Mistake ; and we are no less *Wanton* than *Ignorant* in what we Ask and Desire of this Nature. 'Tis not good therefore to be too Eager in our Desires, too Importunate or Sollicitous in our per-

pursuit of any thing here below. The wisest way then is to beg of God to Choose for us, and rest satisfied in his Choice when we have done : for he being *Wiser* and more Knowing than any of his Creatures, 'tis but fitting that Humane *Folly* shou'd stoop to Divine *Wisdom*, and Blind *Ignorance* be directed by Infallible *Knowledge* and Omniscieny.

2ly. Consider whatever the Providence of God permits to befall us, is principally intended for our *Good* and *Benefit*, and not in the least for our Hurt and Injury, except we make it so through our own Default. *God is Good* and *doth Good*, saith the Psalmist, and *his Mercy is over all his Works*, *Psalm. 135*. Consider therefore the Infinite Kindness and Benignity of our Maker, 'tis impossible he shou'd design wrong or Injury to his Creatures. Can you be so weak to Imagine that the *greatest Goodness* in the World can

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take Delight in our Sufferings and Afflictions, or Please himself with our Groans and Sighs? Is it any manner of Pleasure to him to behold our Grief and Sorrow, or Pains and Torments? Verily no: For *he doth not willingly Afflict or Grieve the Children of Men. Lament.*

3. 33. And therefore when at any time he Afflicts us, or seems to be Displeased with us, he chiefly designs thereby our Good and Benefit in our Tryal and Amendment.

A Continued and Uninterrupted Series of Prosperity is apt to Corrupt our Minds and Elate our Spirits; to Puff us up with Pride and Vanity to the forgetting of God and our selves too: when therefore God sends Adversity in any kind it is to remind us of our weakness and frailty and to keep us low and Humble in the Thoughts thereof.

Take the *Prodigal* for an Instance; how Humble and Selfdenying

ing was he grown in the time of his Affliction and Distress. His Hunger and Necessity brought him to a sense of his Miserable Estate and Condition; this sense of his Misery brought him to *Repentance* for his Sin and Folly; and this Repentance begat in him a most Profound Humility and Self-debasing thoughts of his own Unworthiness. *I am not worthy, saith he, to be called thy Son, make me as one of thy hired Servants, Luke. 15.* He that slighted before the Relation of a Son, desired now that of a *Servant*: This he thought was Preference enough in his Fathers House, and dry Bread good Cheer after he had fed upon Husks and tabled with the Swine, which he was forc't to keep.

Thus the Providence of God is able to turn those Things to our Good and Benefit, to our Profit and Advantage, which we think to be otherwise: for alas! we see not to the End of things, and therefore

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are not able to judge of the Event till afterwards, nor pass Sentence till the Conclusion of the whole.

Who would have thought at first sight, that *Joseph's* being sold for a Slave, shou'd have been the occasion of his Rise, or that his *Preferment* shou'd have lain through a *Prison*? Who would have thought that *Hamans* Envy and spite against *Mordecai* shou'd have ended in Honour, and made way for his own Ruine and his Enemies Advancement in the Court of *Persia*? And as little did *David* think in his Distress that *Saul's* Jealousie and Persecution did only fit him for the Government, and assure to him the Throne after his Decease: And as little did *Job* dream that his utter undoing shou'd be recompensed with twice the Greatness and Prosperity that formerly he enjoyed: and yet thus it proved in the Conclusion to those eminent Worthies.

Many Providences which we regret



gret and Murmur at, have yet been *Over-ruled* by the Divine Power and Wisdom unto our greatest Advantage, and turned unexpectedly to our Benefit. This almost every Man may be sensible of in one kind or other, had he either the Wit or Religion to reflect upon the Various Instances of God's Overruling Providence throughout the whole Course of his Life past.

The Consideration therefore of a kind, benign and wise Providence, which intends the Good and Benefit of his Creatures, and orders all things accordingly, shou'd, methink, be sufficient to charm down our Discontent, stop our Mouths, and silence our Murmurs and Complaints for ever.

3d. Consider, we have as much Reason to *Trust* God in the Ordinary Course of his Providence as to *Trust* Man; which yet we commonly do in many things, and those of the Highest and most Important concern,

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Concern, *viz.* such as relate to our *Life and Health*, to our *Estates* and *Fortune* in this World.

*Credendum est Artifici in Arte sua :*  
To believe a Knowing and Prudent Man in his own Profession, is a well-known Maxim, and confirmed by every days Experience, He being presumed to be more vers'd and better skill'd therein than any other, tho' none are *Infallible* : Upon this account we are willing to trust many of our Worldly Concerns with other Men, who (we think) have greater knowledge and insight thereinto than our selves : we ask their Opinion and take Advice, which yet may fail, and 'tis usual with us to rely more upon it than upon our own.

We trust the *Physician* with our Bodies, and put the Life of our Dearest Friends into his hands ; and tho' they do not always Recover, yet we endeavour to satisfy our Selves in what he has done, and  
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never quarrel or fall out with him.

Why then shou'd we not Acquiesce in the Good-will and Pleasure of Almighty God, and rest contented with whatever he doth for us, without Murmuring and Complaint, without Vexing and Tormenting our selves beyond Reason, and to no purpose at all? What! shall we not *Trust God* as much as any of his *Creatures*, and resign up our selves to the Guidance and Conduct of unerring Wisdom, as well as to the uncertain Guessees and fallible Conjectures of Humane Art and Science?

When we can Trust Men with our Bodies and Estates, with our Lives and Fortunes, and yet will not Trust God with the like, we do in effect affirm, that *Man* is wiser than his *Maker*, that he is more Knowing, than God, and can do more and contrive better for us, than Almighty Power, Infinite Wisdom, and

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and Immense Goodness joyned together.

4ly. Consider again, that *Murmuring* and *Repining* at Affliction is to no purpose at all, and will do us no good in the World; by all our Fretting and Vexing, Impatience and Discontent we cannot change the Nature of things, nor alter the course of Divine Providence, cannot remove the least Trouble, nor recover the smallest Loss thereby.

God, as he is *most-Wise*, so he is *All-Powerful*, and therefore both can and will do whatsoever pleaseth him both in Heaven and Earth, without asking leave or taking Advice from any of his Weak and Shallow Creatures. God's Will shall and must be done in spite of Ours: He will Govern and over-rule do what we can; He will Govern the World in general, and Dispose of us and our Concerns in particular, notwithstanding All that we can do or say to the contrary. In vain there,



fore *do we set our Mouths against Heaven, and let our Hearts fret against the Lord.*

And as it is to *no purpose* to Murmur and Repine with respect to God and his Providence ; so it is to very *ill purpose* with respect to our selves and our Condition. It never yet did any Good in this World, but a great deal of Harm be sure ; for instead of bettering, we do but make our Condition so much the worse thereby : We Create our selves more trouble than we need ; and are but Ingenious to Torment our selves to no purpose at all. But now on the contrary, Patience under Trouble, and Submission to the Hand of God wou'd *cut off* a World of Needless and Superfluous care : It lessens our Burden and makes Affliction to sit more light and easie ; when as Frowardness and Discontent doth but increase the Weight and Pressures thereof, and render it so much the more Hea-  
vy and Insupportable. The

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The way therefore to have *our* Wills, is to deny 'em in Submission to that of God's : Let but our Wills be united to his, and that is the way never to have them Crost or Disappointed. The most Effectual Course we can take to rid our selves of Unnecessary Care and Trouble, is to *Commit our way to the Lord, Psalm 37th.* and resolve upon an entire Resignation to his Holy Will and Pleasure, who orders All things as he sees Best, and which may make most for our Good. As long therefore as God's Will is done, we shou'd not be over solicitous about our own.

5ly. In order to the bringing your Wills into a Submission to That of God's, consider further, that Sufferings and Afflictions, Losses and Disappointments is not *your* Condition alone, but the Common Fate of the Universe and the general Lot of *all Mankind.*

There never *was*, and therefore

we have reason to believe there never *will* be any one Man in the World, who may be said to be Happy *ex omni parte*, in all Respects as to this Present Life : No Man yet ever enjoyed the *Whole* of his Desires, attained the Height of his Wishes, or sat down with full Content and Compleat Satisfaction. He only may be said to be *most* Happy in the World, who is *least* Miserable in it, and hath *fewest* Cares and Sorrows to Afflict and Disquiet him, *fewest* Troubles and Necessities to Wrestle and Contend withal.

As for the Generality of Mankind, shou'd we listen to their frequent Sighs and Groans, to their daily Murmurs and Complaints, we shou'd look upon 'em as a company of forlorn and miserable Wretches ; for we can hardly pass an Hour in company of our Friends, but one or other are filling our Ears with a Doleful Relation of their Sorrows, and sad *Iliads* of their Misfortunes:

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inſomuch as the pleaſure of Society  
 is oft interrupted with Sighs and  
 Tears, and the more Chearful part  
 of Converſation is exchanged for a  
 more Charitable Reſentment of our  
 Neighbours ſad Eſtate and afflicted  
 Condition.

As for thoſe that carry it more  
 Brisk and Gay, who ſeem to be the  
 Darlings of Fortune, and the Envy  
 of the Unfortunate; yet we have  
 reaſon to think, that all is not Gold  
 that Gliſters, nor yet is it fair Wea-  
 ther all the Year long with them  
 that laugh and ſmile and look ſo  
 Pleaſant. Their Mirth is very often  
 feigned and diſſembled, forced from  
 a heart full of Trouble and Anguiſh  
 in the ſad Remembrance of their  
 paſt Crimes, or preſent Miſfortunes.  
 Some Men ſeem *Happy* even to Envy,  
 who yet are *Miſerable* in their own  
 Thoughts: Many there are who  
 make a great ſhew, and carry it  
 High and Brave, Brisk and Jolly in  
 the World, who, were their Condi-

tion exactly stated, wou'd appear the Objects of the greatest Pity imaginable. We may be ignorant of the Grief or Ail of our next Neighbour, most Intimate Friend and Bosom Companion; we may be very well Acquainted with some Persons, and yet be Strangers to their Unhappy Circumstances, which if narrowly pryed and lookt into, would set 'em at the greatest Distance from Happiness and Content.

Now *Solamen miseris*, &c. Seeing then that Sorrow and Sufferings, Afflictions and Calamities, are not *your* Condition alone, you ought to yield to the common Fate of your Nature, and submit to that Yoke which *All Mankind* do perpetually groan under. Tho', as the Philosopher says, *Malevoli Solatis genus Turba miserorum*: 'Tis a kind of Ill-natured Argument meerly to Comfort our Selves from the Miseries of other people; yet it hath its force in



a Consideration of this Nature, where  
*All* Mankind are equally Concerned  
 and *none* are Exempt.

As long as you are in the World,  
 never think to be exempt from the  
 Changes and Mutations, Revoluti-  
 ons and Vicissitudes thereof in one  
 kind or other : you will be always  
 Shifting out of one Estate into ano-  
 ther, sometimes for the *Better*, some-  
 times for the *Worse*, but never to re-  
 main long in one and the same ;  
 and this you must by no means  
 think strange, or wonder at. For  
*Solomon* saith, *There is Nothing New*  
*under the Sun*, *Eccl. 1.* Nothing  
 happens in the World, but what  
 did happen before you were Born,  
 and will happen again when you  
 are Dead and Gone : According  
 to that of *M. Antoninus*, ὅτι πᾶν  
 γινόμενον, ἢ τὸς αἰῶνι ἔγενετο, καὶ γένηται, καὶ πάλιν  
 γίγνηται. L. 12. §. 21. *What is Now done,*  
*is that which Ever hath been done in*  
*the World, and will ever be done again*



*as long as the World stands, and is doing at this Time all the World over.*

And if so, what Reason is there to expect that you alone shou'd be excepted from the common fate of the Universe, and fare better than the rest of your fellow Creatures. To be willing to live in the World, and yet not to be subject to the Changes and Mutations thereof, is as great a piece of Folly, as if a Man shou'd think to go into the VVater and not be wet, or to walk in the VVind and not to have it blow upon him. Must God make *New* Laws, or alter the Course of *Old* ones for your sake alone, O Murmuring and Repining VVretch? Must he change the Nature of things and vary from the Establisht Course of his Providence, meerly to comply with your unreasonable VVishes and over-fond Desires? Nothing more Absurd and Ridiculous. The best way therefore it to submit and to be Quiet; be content with what God doth, who

is

is as well able to *Govern* the World now, as he was to *Make* it at first. Let his Will then be the Rule and Measure of yours, in point both of Obedience and Submission thereunto.

6th. Consider once more, All your *Sufferings*, whether Publick or Private, are no more than what you *deserve*, and are much fewer than your *Sins* which have brought 'em upon you : *why then shou'd a Living man complain, a man that is punish'd for his Sins ? i. e.* VVhy should Man, a *Sinful Man* complain, that is not punished but for his Sins, that is, according to his Deserts, and which by his own folly he hath brought on himself ; and then why shou'd a *Living Man* complain, a Man that while he is *Alive* and out of Hell, is punished far less than his Iniquities have deserved.

Every Man is prone to have ill thoughts of his own Condition, and  
think

think worse of it than of that of others ; instead of acknowledging himself with St. *Paul* to be the *chiefest of Sinners*, he is ready to cry out, that of all Creatures *he is most Miserable*. VVe are apt to think others *less deserving* than our selves, and our selves *more Wretched* and *Unfortunate* than they, which is injuriously done. For if we judge our own Misfortunes greater than others, let us but reflect upon our *Sins* which have been the occasion thereof, and examine whether they have not been more in Number, and of a greater Size and Magnitude than the Sins of other Men, and so are but the just occasion of our Calamities. Now this Consideration doth more naturally call for *Repentance* than *Repining*, and prompt to deep Humiliation, rather than Discontent.

To which I may add further ; consider how many *Blessings* are left, and which you do enjoy above many others ;

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others ; and yet how few you can lay claim unto. You that Murmur because you have no more, consider how *Little* you Deserve, and what wou'd remain or be left you, shou'd God bereave you of all those Comforts you have Abused and Misemployed, and leave you no more than what you merit at his Hands.

Compare the many *Mercies* you enjoy to the many *Sins* you have been guilty of, and see then whether *Mercy doth not rejoyce against Judgment*. See whether God is not Good, Kind and Bountiful, beyond not only Desert, but Expectation too. If your Sins and Losses, if your Guilt and Sufferings were well adjusted and set one against another, you wou'd find 'tis a Mercy that you have any Comfort left, when as you have deserved to be stript naked and bereft of All.

Further yet, were but the tenth part of that Grief and Sorrow laid  
out.

out upon your *Sins* as are upon your worldly Losses and Troubles, you wou'd become *Greater Penitents* and much *Better Christians* than now you are : you wou'd be Happy amidst all your Sufferings, and have greater cause to smile and rejoyce, tho' under a Cloud, than now you have to fret and vex your selves : you wou'd have more reason to clear up in the midst of Sorrow, than to be cast down through the Excess of it.

7ly. Let me recommend unto you one Consideration more, and that is this, esteem and think your present Condition always to be the best and fittest for you, till God by his Providence shall think fit to work a Change and Alteration therein, either by making way for your Deliverance in case of *Danger* and *Calamity*, or by Bettering your Condition in point of *Fortune* and *Estate* : but in the mean time learn to submit to your present Condition as  
it



it is, seeing the Divine Providence hath thought fit to choose it for you.

'Tis the best and wisest course you can take, to stand to Gods Choice, and refer your self to his good Pleasure in every thing, till Providence shall make way for a more Successful Change and Happy Alteration: And when the Providence of God shall do this, by furnishing you with means, and presenting you with an opportunity of Bettering your Circumstances in a Safe and Lawful way (for a Christian is allowed to use no other) then you may conclude, 'tis God's Will you shou'd do so, and not before; then you may endeavour to make your Condition more easie and convenient, more fit and suitable than at present perhaps it is.

But now, tho' in such a case, you may lawfully use the means and lay hold of the opportunity when it shall offer it self for that purpose; yet

yet still with this Caution, that you take heed of running your selves into Snares and Temptations through an Over-greedy and too Covetous desire of Worldly Riches and Honours; for if the Holy Ghost had not told us, yet daily Experience doth assure it for a great Truth, that the *Love of Money is the Root of all Evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows, Tim. 6. 10.* Which Caution is not unnecessary, considering how many Men there are, who upon that account betake themselves to Unlawful Means and Unjust Arts to grow Rich and become great in the World, which too often prove a mighty Temptation and Snare, and runs 'em into a world of Mischief and Inconveniency. v. 9. To prevent which the best way we can take is to moderate our Desires in the pursuit of the World, rather than to gratifie all their

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Immoderate and Unreasonable Demands.

But this is certainly true, when God gives us leave, or which is all one, when Providence doth offer it self, we may make our Circumstances more easie and commodious for us, yea more Delightful and Convenient too, if they be of themselves Troublesome and Uneasie, Streight and Necessitous : but then if our Endeavours herein shou'd chance to fail, this shou'd not overmuch Afflict or Disquiet us, seeing it is the Will of God they shou'd do so ; and his Will ought evermore to be the Measure and Rule of ours.

In the mean time, let the Event of our Endeavours be what it will, our Spirits must not rise nor swell with our Fortune on the one hand, nor yet sink or be dejected on the other : but like Good Christians, and True Disciples of Christ, who believe a God and Providence, ordering  
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dering all things for our Good, we ought to preserve, as much as in us lies, an Even Temper and Uniform Disposition of Mind, in both Extrems, like the calm Regions above, which know not what a Storm or Tempest means. This Frame of Spirit, tho' in its perfection, 'tis the Happiness of the *Saints* above, yet we ought to aspire after it as much as 'tis possible in this Life, and endeavour to Resemble those Blessed *Spirits*, which overflow with Joy and are swallowed up with Unspeakable Delight and Satisfaction, which the sight and presence of God doth inspire 'em withal.

8th. I might further perswade to and enforce this Duty of the Text, from the Examples of Good Men in Scripture, who have been Eminent and Remarkable Instances of a Profound Submission and Entire Resignation to the Will of God under the forest Tryals and most Calamitous Sufferings: witness the Two High-Priests,

Priests, *Aaron* and *Eli*, upon the death of their Children ; *David* upon the unnatural Rebellion of his Son *Abalom* ; *Job* upon the Loss of his whole Estate and sudden Death of his seven Sons and three Daughters, being all the Children he had.

More especially I might do this from the most Admirable Example of our *Blessed Saviour* ; an Example that out-strips all that may be called Mortal, being the most perfect Instance of Patience, and Exemplary Patern of Humility and Resignation, both Living and Dying ; and yet such as was intended and is proposed by the Holy Ghost for our Imitation, 1 *Pet.* 2. 21.

Now all these forementioned Instances and Considerations, if duly weighed and attended unto, may be able, through the Grace of God, to quiet and compose our Spirits amidst the greatest fears and apprehensions ; enable us to bear up under Affliction, not only with Patience and Submissi-  
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on to the Will of a wise and good God ; but with Cheerfulness and Resolution, becoming the Greatness of a Christian Soul, and the Gallantry of a Divine and Heroick Spirit. That Man therefore that endeavours to Arm and Prepare himself beforehand for Afflictions by the forementioned Considerations, will be so far from avoiding 'em by any base and unworthy means, that he will choose rather to court the greatest Sufferings than wilfully commit the least Sin to prevent or escape 'em.

Considering further, that we have the very same Help and Assistance promised us, which the forementioned Worthies had to Comfort and Support them, *viz.* the good Spirit and Grace of God, which is promised to all those that Ask and Pray for it as they ought : And, lastly, we have the same Hopes of Glory and Recompence of Reward as they had, to crown our Faith and Patience in the end.

4<sup>th</sup>. I proceed now in the last place  
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to conclude all with a brief Reflexion on the whole.

Be instructed then in this great Christian Duty, and take out the Lesson in the Text, of *Submission* to the Will of God, and a Surrender of your selves unto his wise Providence and Dispose : let us desire of God to choose our Condition for us, seeing he can never choose amiss (as we may and often do) and then satisfie our selves in what he doth for us.

Be content to be at his Allowance; sit down and rest satisfied with whatever Portion he shall carve out for you, as being well assured, that tho' it may not seem good to you at present, yet it will most certainly work for your good in the end, and we shall find at length, that it wou'd not have been so well with us, had it been otherwise.

If you cannot have your own Will, let God have his, and be willing to comply therewith; in the mean time doing your Duty and what he commands

mands and expects from you in your present Circumstances: This is the only way to have our Wills indeed, notwithstanding things may at any time run counter to our Wishes, and cross to our Desires : Do but submit to the Will of your Heavenly Father, depend upon his Providence, in the faithful discharge of your Duty, and then let the state of your Condition, and the event of things prove what they will, a Christian cannot but be safe, and may defie the World to make him miserable. This is the way to be content in the midst of want, cheerful in an afflicted condition ; to have inward Ease amidst outward Trouble ; in a word, to have a foretaste of the Happiness above, even while we are surrounded with Sorrow, and forced to dwell in a Vale of Tears.

I shall conclude all with the Opinion and Advice of a very Wise and Noble Heathen, *M. Antoninus* I mean, who was both *Emperour* and *Philosopher*

*pher too*, whereby you may see how far he out-stript us Christians, by the Light of Nature, notwithstanding the Advantage we have of him in respect of a Clearer Light, and a more Perfect Rule to walk by : For a Man (saith he) to be content and satisfied with his Condition, to receive meekly whatever Providence doth allot him in the World, is the Proof and Argument of a very good Man, *ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος βέλτερον ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὰ δέδωκεν*, L 3. S. 4. Such a one (saith he) is throughly season'd and principled with Goodness and Piety, as he instances in *Socrates*, that singular Instance of Pagan Virtue and Morality : and again (he saith) he whose Will doth concur with Gods, and whose Mind hath resigned up it self unto the good Pleasure of Heaven, who lives in a daily dependance on Divine Providence, may be styled *θεοφρόνης*, one lead and inspired by God and mightily assisted by his Spirit ; he is an Excellent and Extraordinary Person indeed, who is conducted wholly by the Divine Will. Thus much for his Opinion. His Advice



Advice follows to this Purpose: We ought (saith he) to pray rather to have our Minds composed and quieted under Affliction, than to have it presently removed or taken off; rather to bear Sufferings manfully than like Children to cry and take on to be rid of 'em; one prays (saith he) that he might not loose his Child or his Friend, but do you pray that you may neither be Unwilling nor Afraid to part with 'em when ever God shall call them out of this World, for a Dead Child is more desireable than a Wicked and Undutiful one. One prays that he may compass his Ill Designs, either of Lust, Pride, Oppression, or Ambition; but do you pray that you neither covet that which is evil and unlawful. One studies how to live gay and merrily, or gratifie his Sensual Appetite and Inclination; but let it be your business to live like Men, and moderate your brutish Appetites and Desires, referring your self wholly to the Divine Conduct and Dispose, saying in the language of an Humble and Contented Spirit, *δὲς ὃ θέλεις ἀπολαβὴ ὃ θέλεις*. L. 10. C. 16. Give what thou wilt, and take what thou wilt; not unlike to that Religious Aphorism in Holy Job, *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the Name of the Lord*; or in the Words of the Text, *The Will of the Lord be done. Amen.*

F I N I S.





